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Tribal College:

Chapter 5: Draft 2

~~Impact of the Colleges~~

Impact: Building Community

~~It is often said that American society has become~~  
dangerously fragmented. With growing concern, some critics now charge that we have lost faith in the symbols and values that keep us united as a nation. Belief in a shared heritage has been weakened while trust in institutions--from the federal government to the local church--has been greatly tested.

Perhaps of greatest concern, however, is the broader charge that once valued connections to community have been replaced with an emphasis on the individual. While Americans once sought their identity through their contributions to the larger society, the focus has now shifted inward. Advancement of the self has become the new national priority.

"Americans have committed what to the republican founders of our nation was the cardinal sin: we have put our own good, as individuals, as groups, as a nation, ahead of the common good," writes Robert Bellah in Habits of the Heart, one of the most thoughtful summaries of America's changing values.

Education mirrors the trend. Conservative commentators such as former Secretary of Education William Bennett and Allan Bloom, author of The Closing of the American Mind, argue that colleges and universities fail by offering curriculums that are too value-neutral and not grounded in the Western heritage. Likewise, E. D. Hirsh worries in his book, Cultural Literacy, about a nation

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that no longer has a shared understanding of social and intellectual traditions, from classical literature to the Gettysburg Address.

Other less strident commentators hold that social change is not necessarily negative, but still agree that higher education must provide students with a deeper understanding of their place in society. It is widely accepted that today's youth, while bright and eager to please, are nonetheless in a state of disrepair. Anecdotes, surveys and numerous studies have provided a portrait of a self-centered generation more interested in earning than learning. On America's campuses as well, the cult of the individual has taken precedence over community and status is now the ultimate goal.

But within the nation's colleges and throughout the country there is a growing attempt to rebuild these fractured links between individuals and time. Many believe a social core does still exist, even if it remains untapped. Argues Bellah: "Our lives make sense in a thousand ways, most of which we are unaware of, because of traditions that are centuries, if not millennia, old."

He explains:

If we are not entirely a mass of interchangeable fragments within an aggregate, if we are in part qualitatively distinct members of a whole, it is because there are still operating among us, with whatever difficulties, traditions that tell about the nature of the world, about the nature of society, and about who we are as a people. . . Somehow families, churches, a variety of cultural associations, and even if only in the interstices, schools and universities, do manage to communicate a form of life, a paideia, in the sense of growing up in a morally and intellectually intelligible world (Bellah, pp. 281-282).

~~Issues in Native American society, in perhaps an even more profound way, parallel this national search. It takes little investigation to confirm that~~ American Indian cultures have been greatly shaken through their contact with the dominant society. Traditions have been lost and, with <sup>them</sup> it, self-esteem and self-identity. Evidence of the resulting impact on communities--from alcoholism to illiteracy--are recognized within most Indian cultures with a sense of concern.

But many tribal cultures are also working to rebuild what has been lost. From tribal industries that manufacture military components to cultural committees that preserve traditional values, Native Americans are trying to construct a new and supportive society, ~~trying to put the pieces back together.~~

~~that~~ <sup>reflects a search for unity that the dominant culture also</sup> Mirroring Bellah's proposal for all American society, tribal cultures are working not to return to the past, but to, <sup>is pussy.</sup> appropriately, see it as the foundation for future growth. In this way, reconciliation with the Native American heritage is as essential as understanding of Jeffersonian thought is to Anglo-American culture.

And in Indian society as well, Education is expected to play a central role. According to Native American historian Jack Forbes, Indian-controlled institutions can fulfil the same cultural and social role in their communities that white-controlled colleges provide in theirs:

"Native tribal and folk groups especially need their own institutions in order not merely to preserve that portion of their heritage which proves to be worthy of preservation, but

also in order to develop a sufficiency degree of self-confidence, pride, and optimism . . . A Native American university can serve as an agency for helping to restore the quite obvious ability in self-management and self-realization which Indian possessed prior to the intervention of the federal government" [Forbes, Native American Higher Education, p. 47].

As a vehicle to this understanding, tribally-controlled colleges are ~~recognized as~~ one of the most successful examples of institutions that are <sup>can</sup> ~~working to~~ rebuild <sup>community</sup> ~~their societies~~. Like their counterparts, the nation's community colleges, tribal colleges are expected to serve the spectrum of needs for both the individual and their communities. While most have been in existence for only a decade or less, they ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> providing their tribal <sup>societies</sup> ~~communities~~ with the kind of unity and understanding that much of American society is still looking for.

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At first glance, tribally-controlled colleges offer images of diversity. Curriculums, teaching styles and, in some cases, even campus architecture mirrors the surrounding tribal cultures, with each one unique from the other. Some colleges focus on general education, while others emphasize vocational training. A few have campuses that would be the envy of any small, rural college, while many others offer classes in mismatched trailers.

But beyond such differences, all colleges ~~do~~ share a common goal. While specific strategies can vary, all are determined to strengthen respect for their cultural heritage and create greater opportunity for tribal members. Finding ways to build their

communities and create links to the larger American society are the common goals from campus to campus.

Tribal colleges work to <sup>3 stages</sup> provide <sup>community</sup> this opportunity through their curriculums, <sup>through the</sup> campus environments <sup>on campus</sup> and programs that reach out to all tribal society. The impact of the most effective colleges are visible at all levels of society. The watchword at Indian colleges is not simply education, but also ~~opportunity and empowerment.~~

The heart of the tribal college, ~~however~~, is on each campus. Among the institutions, there is a common belief that Indian students are best served when the curriculum reflects the needs of the surrounding tribal culture and when the college itself provides a nurturing and supportive environment.

~~As a first step,~~ <sup>all</sup> tribal colleges <sup>seek first</sup> work to rebuild ~~many~~ <sup>of course find</sup> ~~only~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~students'~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~cultural~~ <sup>of course find</sup> ~~heritage.~~ On many reservations, native beliefs, languages and traditional arts have been slowly lost. Values once shared through a rich tradition of story-telling were dying with tribal elders and the full spectrum of ancient skills were not being preserved. Traditional culture was existing only in textbooks while Anglo values remained alien and unaccepted.

<sup>In response to</sup> Confronting this loss, all colleges offer a ~~similar range~~ of courses in Native American culture, ~~each reflecting their community's unique heritage and values.~~ On the Sinte Gleska College campus, the Lakota studies department offers classes in Sioux history, "oral literature," Lakota thought and a four course language sequence. "Today we drive cars, we live in houses, wear modern clothes," reflected Native Studies Director

Albert White Hat. "But we still speak our languages, sing our songs. We are struggling to survive."

✓ ~~Similar range of courses are offered in traditional arts.~~

At the smaller Lac Courte Oreilles Community College in Wisconsin, courses in their native studies sequence include instruction traditional clothing styles, music, and dances. Continuing education courses at Oglala Lakota College include such specific areas of study as "How to Set Up a Tipi," quillwork, and preparation of traditional Indian foods. Lummi Community College on the northern coast of Washington state provides instruction in canoe carving, woodwork, and Indian knitting--skills unique to their tribal culture.

But Indian culture is valued not just as an anthropological discipline. Even on reservations where traditional beliefs have not been lost an emphasis cultural integrity still remains the essential foundation. Through it, students are told that who they are and what they believe is acceptable and has value. In this way, college is not a disorienting experience for Indian students, but a reenforcement of values unique to the tribal community. Not just an area of study, then, courses in Indian culture are seen as a route to tribal unity and individual pride.

This is a sharp contrast to the typical Native American experience in non-Indian controlled institutions. While some students are able to bridge cultural barriers without great difficulty, many feel inferior and alienated by the unfamiliar environment and curriculum. Researcher Danielle Sanders

reported, for example, that the continuity between home and school that exists in the white culture is not present for many Indians. Instead, she found that "school is an experience that runs contrary to the social norms, self-perceptions, and expected behaviors that they have learned at home and that have been reinforced in the own cultural community" [Sanders, Journal of Multicultural Counseling, 1987, p. 85].

The result is erosion of self-esteem, she said. "American Indian children anxiously enter school with eagerness and a willingness to learn and with pride in their rich cultural background. This original eagerness quickly sours and they become withdrawn and passive as they learn very early what Anglo-American teachers and peers think of them and their culture" [Sanders, p. 86].

~~But~~ tribal colleges work to eliminate this discontinuity by emphasizing traditional culture. Through it, personal identity and a sense of self-worth are enhanced, not challenged.

"We're trying to bring a positive image back," said White Hat. "We're telling the young people that they can be proud of who they are and what they are. They don't have to wear a feather to be an Indian, but what is inside--how they look at themselves--is what's important" [site visit report, 1988].

On the Salish-Kootenai campus, this philosophy is shared by Vice President Gerald Slater:

"Many young people have a history of heavy drinking and have, in general, a lack of self-respect. But as they get more involved in traditional culture, they begin to get new self-respect. Sometimes they will quit their drinking and begin to

find a life that is more meaningful for them."

He continued: "Forced assimilation has resulted in a lack of respect for indians and their ways. Now people are realizing that these ways are good. They're different, but there is nothing wrong with them. There is a sense of pride and dignity that comes with it."

One evening, Myrna Chief Stick, a part-time instructor at Salish Kootenai, sat alone in an empty hallway while her class prepared for its final exam in Coyote stories. Used to explain various natural events and offer, at times, important moral lessons, Coyote stories are a part of many Indian societies. Students had spent the semester learning and discussing these tales and were now getting ready to act out one one such story for Chief Stick.

While waiting for her students to call her back into the classroom, she too spoke of the "self-respect, dignity and honesty" that traditional culture provides. Through the work of the the tribe and the college, she said tribal members are starting to identify these values for themselves.

"In the last four or five years, people are more aware than they have been in years," she said.

The six students in the class, talking after their presentation, offered similar ideas. Wallace Shorty believed that classes in traditional culture and language offer students insight into their own identity.

"A lot of kids are Indian, but they don't know what it means to be Indian," he said. "They don't know how to go about it."

There is also the determination to carry what they learned on to the next generation, according to student Arlene Adams.

"I think that's why I took it," she said. "A lot of our elders and a lot of our people who told these stories are now dead. Their children and grandchildren don't know them. I'd like to be able to pass them down."

But the impact of native culture is not felt just in these selected classes. Instead there is also an effort at all tribal colleges to integrate traditional values into the administrative structures and teaching styles of the whole institution. All activities of the colleges are expected to be linked seamlessly to the community.

~~For example,~~ <sup>A</sup> at Little Big Horn College in Montana the need for courses in traditional culture at the Crow college is less urgent, said President Janine Windy Boy, because the tribal culture has remained strong. On that isolated reservation about 80 percent of the Crow residents still speak the native language and sweat lodges grace the backyards of many homes.

Instead, the impact of traditional culture is felt in how information is presented and how the affairs of the college are conducted. There, each department tries to integrate Indian thought into all college activities and much of the work is focused not simply on inserting Indian culture, but adapting the curriculum and teaching styles to Crow values and individual needs.

This philosophy of individual attention and cultural integration is visible in such traditionally "non-Indian" disciplines as math and science. One of the most consistently

difficult areas of study for Native American students, Little Big Horn instructor Robert Madsen has worked to make his curriculum accessible to students more prepared for failure than success.

"I eliminate those things that set them up for failure," Madsen said. "I don't accept a failing attitude." As a result, most tests are open book and if a student fails, he or she is encourage to work with Madsen and retake the exam.

"I don't put a weight around their necks," he said. "If they get a "D", they take the test over until they do "A" work."

Also, Madsen tries to emphasize the relevance of his subject to the students. "A big part of what goes on in the class is not determining the composition of calcium, but learning to solve problems," he said. "The math is there, but it is tied to concrete things."

He stressed, however, that the focus on success does not mean that academic quality is sacrificed. "I love giving out A's, but I make them earn them."

"This is a place where good science can happen, Madsen argued. "It is not just at Montana State University or Harvard."

Other colleges offer their own innovative ways to bridge the gap between Indian thought and western education. Turtle Mountain College in North Dakota, for example, does not offer a separate native studies program. Instead of isolating courses in Indian thought from the rest of the curriculum, the intent is to inject an Indian perspective in all of its classes and programs. In this way, Indian values and history are not just one areas of possible study, but is theoreticlly part of all that Turtle

Mountain does.

While there is instruction in Indian history, art and language, traditional thought and culture has influence beyond these few classes. Instead, a Native American perspective is expected to be included in all classes. President Gerald Monette admitted that this "is easier said than done," but still estimated that most classes have successfully integrated an Indian perspective.

Not surprisingly, the social sciences have most easily adopted the traditional disciplines. Emma Wilkie, one of the college's senior instructors, makes a deliberate effort to incorporate an Indian viewpoint in her sociology classes. Texts that treat Native Americans with greater respect are chosen and then supplemented with additional books and articles that explain the Native American perspective. For example, an examination of the family would include not only the usual Anglo perspective, but would also include study of the Indian family's unique structure. Family trees and oral histories are also popular learning tools for Wilkie.

Other subjects, such as literature and history, are equally able to include an Indian perspective. Even simple biology and geology classes have tapped into the spirit of the goal by including the study of local plants--including those used by early settlers--and teaching how the region's rolling topography was formed.

But it is clearly more difficult to find a local connection to math and the hard sciences. For some professors in these areas, the best solution has been to make the subjects as

intellectually an emotionally accessible as possible. As is done at Little Big Horn, the Indian influence is not always noticeable in the material, but is visible in how the material is taught.

Sister Margaret Pfeifer, a math instructor, believed students are best able to succeed when the air of academic competition is replaced by greater cooperation, a philosophy that is more in line with Indian society where family obligations are stressed over individual advancement. Her math assignments frequently allow--even encourage--group work and mutual assistance. As a result, the quality of the classwork and enrollment retention rates go up while anxiety over this traditionally stressful discipline goes down.

"The idea, she said simply, "is to teach math in such a way that Indians can learn it." The best way to accomplish this fundamental goal in non-Indian colleges is clearly not always the best way in Indian country. There is, then, no compelling reason why traditional American teaching methods must always be duplicated.

Similarly, another instructor recently added cooperative learning to his accounting class. Studying and some assignments were completed as a group and, according to Academic Dean Lousie Dauphinais, "the students loved it." Only one of fourteen students dropped the class and many earned an "A."

Navajo Community College, meanwhile, has been working to not only find appropriate teaching methods, but to also pattern the college's larger academic structure after Navajo belief. While individual courses are not being transformed, disciplines are

being structured around the Navajo culture's traditional emphasis on the four compass directions.

For example, the academic disciplines of religious studies, physical education, language and aesthetics all mold into a single category of attributes inherent to the east: knowledge that prepares people to make decisions. The west, meanwhile, focuses on the social well-being of the tribe. Within this category, the disciplines of sociology, history and government fit comfortably. Other areas of study are linked to the north and south [Benally, pp. 141-143].

Following the same logic, the college itself is located in the physical center of Navajoland and the campus layout is modeled after the four directions, all within a larger circle. While not all of this symbolism will be of use to students trying to pass an algebra exam, the larger effort to integrate the college into the Navajo culture is critical. It offers evidence that the college exists within the larger Navajo experience and can be an integral part of traditional tribal culture.

"The Navajo maintain that people need a sense of history to understand their immediate world and to prepare them for the future," wrote Herbert Benally, native studies director at the college. "To accomplish this it is necessary only to create an educational institution which will place the individual at the focus where the four great branches of Navajo knowledge meet. . . ." [Benally, Dine Bei'ina', pp. 145-147).

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In the end, every <sup>tribal college</sup> ~~institution~~ is using the cultural foundation of its community to create an environment where Indian

students can learn and build confidence.

<sup>But</sup> The challenge is enormous. <sup>These Indians</sup> They frequently work in <sup>struggle</sup> on environments of <sup>shocky</sup> extreme poverty, where welfare and dependancy are the common social demoninators. In addition, many communities are without a <sup>solid progr</sup> tradition of <sup>pecalye</sup> formal education. Through time, Native Americans have been poorly served by government efforts and, even today, few colleges and universities are able to offer an educational environment that is supportive, not disorienting. As a result, the percentage of American Indians who enter college and graduate with a degree is estimated by many to the lowest in the nation.

For tribal colleges, then, their task goes far beyond simply existing within reservation boundaries and offering a culturally relevant curriculum. They must also overcome the neglect and, at times, disapproval of higher education in some Indian communities. They are educating the first generation of students who will become the role models for the next.

~~But with only a few years of effort and, in every case, severely limited budgets, tribal colleges are offering evidence of their achievement. There is already a cadre of tribal college graduates who have succeeded academically and who have gone on for furthur study or found meaningful work.~~  
<sup>Further the college struggle is over here</sup>  
<sup>no problems not with study</sup>  
<sup>(love game)</sup>

begin to  
bring a  
spirit  
of  
community  
renewal.

For example, <sup>→</sup> before the founding of Sinte Gleska College on the Rosebud Reservation, there were only a handful of Indians working as teachers in the reservation public schools. Today there are 32. <sup>←</sup> Likewise, on the nearby Pine Ridge Reservation, Oglala Lakota College has increased the number of Native American

teachers from just one to 65.

Dull Knife Memorial College in Montana, meanwhile, has, in its short history, graduated 315 students. In a recent survey of its graduates, the college found that half of those who completed a two-year degree went on for further study, while 70 percent of the graduates of a certificate program pursued more education. In an area of high unemployment, 71 percent of all graduates were working at the time of the survey and 93 percent of the certificate students were employed.

Sisseton Wahpeton Community College in South Dakota reported that the number of tribal members with a bachelor's degree increased from four to over 80 since it was founded. This number demonstrates not only the college's ability to educate students, but also its ability to act as a feeder college to four-year institutions.

Turtle Mountain College found in a 1983 survey that 28 percent of its graduates transferred to a four-year college and, overall, more than 70 percent found jobs immediately after graduation. This is in sharp contrast of the over 60 percent unemployment rate for the reservation.

At Standing Rock College, a total of 228 students graduated between its founding in 1976 and 1986. Moreover, a 1987 self-study reported that, while the reservation unemployment rate is about 80 percent, less than five percent of the college's graduates are known to be unemployed or not attending another institution of higher education [SRC Self-Study, 1987, p. 85].

At first glance, these numbers ~~may~~ appear small. In the larger American society, after all, the impact of a few dozen

college graduates is difficult to see. But on a reservation with a population that numbers, in most cases, in just the tens of thousands, the ~~results are more obvious.~~ *input is of new body is private*

← "The difference between these students making a contribution compared to unemployments is very significant," said Art McDonald, president of Dull Knife College.

The guarantee of employment for graduates is, alone, a compelling argument for the tribal colleges. In any American college--especially in junior and community colleges--one important measurement of success is the percentage of students who find work after completion of a degree. But the benefits go beyond employment to individuals. In small communities, these people offer the expertise needed to advance all of tribal society.

Graduates who remain on their reservations after graduation--and most do--provide a full spectrum of needed skills. They offer the seeds of social stability, economic growth, role models for future generations and urgently needed leadership. The tribal colleges provide more than a degree; they offer the key to a healthy culture.

"Tribal colleges are the dominant college in their nations," said Janine Windy Boy. "Just like Harvard works to fulfill the needs of its community, we work to fulfill the needs of ours." In this, the Harvard Brain Trust of the Roosevelt administration is being recreated on nearly two dozen reservations today.

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*still*  
, On many campuses ~~there remains, however, a concern over~~

*remains a problem*

student retention. While those who do complete a degree program are better able to find work or continue their education, ~~there are~~ many students who enter tribal college <sup>with a</sup> hoping to complete a program ~~but~~ drop out long before graduation.

The reasons are not difficult to find. ~~First,~~ Indians have been poorly served throughout their educational career. While estimates vary from tribe to tribe, Native Americans drop out of school at significantly higher levels than whites. The Higher Education Research Institute reported in a 1984 study that "high school attrition is substantially greater among Indians than among majority students," estimating that no more than 55 percent of Indian students graduate from high school [MacNamara, p. 75].

And for those who do finish school, the level of academic preparation <sup>is often</sup> ~~may be~~ very poor. A survey of Indian college educators sponsored by the institute found that almost two-thirds of the respondents identified "inadequate educational preparation for courework demands" as one the three most important barriers to Indian undergraduates' achievement [MacNamara, p. 141].

~~Supporting this finding,~~ a recent study of public high school students on the Turtle Mountain Reservation found that ~~there is a clear pattern of~~ underachievement among all students in nearly all subjects. Even for students who go on to graduate, the gap between their skills and the national average grows each year they are in school [site <sup>trained</sup> report, p. 7].

As a result, <sup>students come to college with</sup> poor academic preparation and <sup>a low self-esteem & few money</sup> an expectation of failure ~~develops and is difficult to overcome in any college or university.~~ <sup>often accepted</sup> As a result, Failure of Indian students is the norm

throughout the ~~entire educational~~ community. Overall, at least sixty percent of white <sup>students</sup> who enter college go on to complete a degree, but only a third of Indians will leave with a diploma [MacNamara, p. 90]. Other estimates are even lower and suggest that Indians have the lowest success rate of any ethnic group.

This legacy <sup>of limited expenses</sup> is a tremendous burden <sup>for</sup> on tribal colleges. Frequently they enroll students with poor academic preparation, continuing obligations to their extended family and no tradition of higher education. Also, students who have already failed or dropped out of a non-Indian college will enroll at a tribal college, perhaps hoping for success but not surprised by failure. These are the people who are best served by tribal colleges, but are also the students most difficult to educate.

The goal of every tribal college is to overcome such barriers. Many institutions, for example, offer a series of remedial classes, formal instruction in skills needed for "college life," counseling and other supportive services. Salish-Kootenai College, for example, has two full-time staff members who work with students who are slipping academically or missing class.

"Sometimes its the smallest problem," President McDonald said. "A broken fan belt can keep a student from getting to school for two weeks."

Such personal attention, in the end, is critical. "Students need to be where somebody knows their names," said Louis Dauphinais, academic dean at Turtle Mountain College. "They need support for academic angst."

College presidents argued, however, that it is inappropriate to expect all student who enter to leave with a diploma. Some arrive intending to take a number of introductory courses before transferring elsewhere while others, in the traditional of community colleges nationwide, take selected courses for personal enrichment, not a diploma. Another group does not drop out, but instead repeatedly stops out, entering and leaving multiple times before completeing a degree.

Graduation rates of less than 100 percent, then, is not evidence of failure. Instead, it is proof of the multiple roles that tribal colleges play. Moreover, their graduation rates are not out of line when compared to all community colleges. At Salish-Kootenai, for example, 60 students graduated at the end of the 1989 spring quarter out of a total full time equivelant of 450. This compares favorably to the overall graduation rate for all community colleges nationwide where about 500,000 students graduated out of a total enrollment of 4.5 million during the same time [McDonald, personal conversation, 3/6/89--confirm with AACJC].

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~~But~~ beyond classroom education and the impact of graduates with jobs and skills, all tribal colleges offer programs aimed directly at their communities. By offering services ranging from daycare and GED testing to alcohol counseling and literacy tutoring, some tribal colleges have become the most powerful social force in their communities.

On these campuses, tribal college administrators assert that it is not enough to simply provide graduates. Instead, they must

also work to create a healthy society that offers both hope and the promise of available jobs to graduating students. On some reservations, these colleges are the only institutions--government or tribal--that are examining all of the societies needs and working to provide real solutions.

And, because they exist within the reservation, they are perhaps the institutions best able to respond to the needs of their unique cultures. While non-Indian teachers, social workers and government administrators can be supportive and caring, it is the Indian themselves who best understand their own culture and the most appropriate routes to social reform and economic development.

"Indian colleges emerged as the one vehicle that developed from within, the one that has the best change to address all of the many issues that have not been addressed," said Sionte Gleska president Lionel Bordeaux.

His college, for example, has a continuing literacy program, started after a 1985 survey found that 19 percent of the reservation Indians between 25 and 38 years of age were without mastery of the English language. By training local volunteers to work one-on-one with residents in isolated communities, college administrators hope to raise expetations throughout the tribe and provide evidence that academic success is possible.

Crucial to the program, said Director Loraine Walking Bull, is the use of Indian volunteers. In this type of program, where tutors are often met with suspicion, sensitivity to the Lakota culture is critical, she said, citing one woman's response as an

example.

Walking Bull went to the home of an older who who did not read or write. She explained the literacy program and asked if the woman would like to learn English, so she would no longer have to depend on her daughter.

"The woman listened and then looked straight at me and said that her son had gone through GED. I left because I knew that in her way she was trying to tell me, 'One of us has gone to school--now leave me alone.' I didn't have to dig any deeper.

↳ Said Walking Bull: "We have to watch what we do because we can turn them off so quick. You have to have a lot of knowledge of the people and really watch what you say."

Would a non-Indian tutor have responded appropriately? This type of sensitivity is what tribal colleges are able to provide.

Also on the Sinte Gleska campus is the Insitute on Alcohol and Substance Abuse. By working directly with students in the college and also at the elementary and secondary school levels, Director Cecil White Hat believed the reservation community is at last recognizing alcohol's devistating impact.

Although the tribe does not permit the sale of alcohol on the reservation, about 80 percent of the population is alcoholic. But despite its pervasiveness, college officials said that Sinte Gleska's institute was the first reservation-wide outreach program. While the government-run Indian Health Service hospital runs a treatment program, there was no effort at education.

Many colleges also offer a variety of educational programs for the community at large. Most, for example, offer free preparation for the high school equivalency test--the GED exam.

✓ For the large percentage of reservation-based Indians without a high school diploma, the GED is the necessary key for entrance into college--both Indian and non-Indian controlled--as well as many government jobs and the military.

On the Turtle Mountain reservation, about 45 percent of the high school students do not finish school, but the nearest GED program was over 90 miles away until the college started its center. With no satisfactory way to earn a diploma, many simply went without the education and remained unemployable.

But today Turtle Mountain College has one full-time and two part-time instructors who tutor about 250 GED students a year. About 65 go on to complete the course and pass the exam. According to Director Sandy LaRocque, about 70 percent of the students are women and many are single parents.

"They quit school because of that, because they got pregnant," she said. Now that their children are older, they are coming back. " Too old to return comfortably to the public school and unable to move off the reservation, the college's program is the only acceptable option. "If there was no program, there would be no alternative," LaRoque asserted.

~~The need is the same on other reservation.~~ At Oglala Lakota College, a total of 566 people were enrolled in their tutoring program in 1986, more than double the enrollment just three years earlier. At that college, like at many others, many of those who pass the exam go on to enroll in the tribal college. At Oglala Lakota, 40 percent of its students have a GED certificate.

In addition to high school equivalency, Salish Kootenai

College has also created an innovative bridge between formal education and hands-on experience. Frustrated by government regulations that made tribal members ineligible for certain federal assistance if they enrolled in college, Salish Kootenai started a work experience program as an alternate route to vocational training. Although classroom instruction is provided free of charge three days a week, the emphasis of the program is on each student's volunteer work in a tribal agency two days a week.

*Salish Kootenai*

Students are given assignments at such offices as the tribal printing plant, shoreline protection, or even a college department. Vice President Gerald Slater said there has been good success in getting students permanent paid positions after the program's completion. However, some of the most important results come from the increased feelings of accomplishment and independence.

"We've had people say that this is the first time they haven't had a drink in years, that they have been sober for months because they enjoyed the opportunity to work," Slater said. "It has been stimulating for them."

Each of these programs work indirectly to increase economic opportunity for the reservations. But several colleges are also actively working to promote economic development within their reservations.

The need is increasingly urgent because there are so few jobs available on most reservations. And as the number of Indian college graduates continues to climb, the few open positions that do exist in tribal and government offices are quickly filled.

For new students to have the opportunity for work after completion of their program, then, tribal colleges must work to build a community that can offer meaningful employment.

Some colleges, like Turtle Mountain, work directly local industry to train works and strengthen productivity. Turtle Mountain Manufacturing, for example, has looked to the college for seminars on personel management and the training of machinists. It has also helped a nearby data entry firm by training future workers in computer use. The success of these companies, in turn, can create more jobs for future graduates.

Sinte Gleska, meanwhile, sponsors the newly established Institute for Economic Development, a policy center that is investigating realistic solutions to the economic stagnation on many reservations. Oglala Lakota is working closely with a grant program that provides loans to Indian-run micro enterprises described earlier.

Finally, ~~other colleges have worked aggressively to improve not only individual opportunity, but the rights of the entire tribe.~~ Little Big Horn College, ~~especially,~~ has successfully challenged local discrimination in a series of lawsuits and has worked to increase opportunity for all tribal members in the process.

In 1981 President Windy boy and others worked to increase the number of Indians registered to vote. Frustrated that Crows made up 46 percent of the county's population but rarely had an impact on regional elections, the number of registered voters was increaed by one-third, from 2,000 to 3,000.

But in the next election, Indians still were not able to offer much influence. Looking more closely at how the political system was organized, the group found that state district boundaries clearly divided the reservation and prevented Indians from having a majority in any one region. Taking the issue to court, the judge agreed that the policy was discriminatory and ruled that the state cannot break up a homogeneous population.

Another successful case involving charges of discriminatory hiring in the county generated graphic examples of what it means to be an Indian in eastern Montana. For example, out of 200 county employees, only four were Indian and while there are 99 county board members, just one was a Crow. There was also testimony charging that Indian children were abused in schools.

← In all, Windy Boy said there were "250 prime cases" of discrimination. "The ACLU lawyers said they had never seen such abuse." The three-year process resulted in yet another favorable decision in 1986, something for which Windy boy and the college is given much credit.

"We have become advocates of decent and right treatment," she acknowledged.

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<sup>Tribal</sup>  
Each college reflects the unique problems and opportunities of its tribe. But together, they are providing routes to advancement for their communities. Through education, Native Americans are gaining the skills and confidence needed to rebuild their nations and cultures.

This goal is not unique to tribal colleges. Throughout all

of American society, educational institutions are focusing on their contributions to larger communities. As one example, the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges released a report on the future of the community college movement, tellingly entitled, Building Communities: A Vision for a New Century.

Concerned that these traditionally responsive and dynamic institutions were losing sight of their mission, the report urged these colleges to define a new commitment based on true service to community. Recognizing that the individual student must remain a key concern, the report's authors go on to argue that, in the end, all members of society are served when a college builds connections throughout a community.

"Community colleges, through the building of educational and civic relationships, can help both their neighborhoods and the nation become self-renewing," the report argues. "The building of community, in its broadest and best sense, encompasses a concern for the whole, for integration and collaboration, for openness and integrity, for inclusiveness and self-renewal" (Building Communities, pp. 6-7).

In this report, tribal colleges were not held up as models for the proposed reforms, but they could have been. As the United States looks to rebuild a commitment to community service, it could do no better than to look to the most dynamic and successful tribal colleges. Through an emphasis on traditional culture, social responsibility and economic development, these institutions have become the single most important force in their nations.

In the end, college officials insist, all of American

society benefits. According to D-Q University President Carlos Cordero, the cost of keeping Indians on welfare is much higher than the expense of putting them through college.

Tribally-controlled colleges produce graduates who "help resolve problems of contemporary society" and, he added, "who are going to pay taxes."