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The Tule River Tribal History Project: Evaluating a California Tribal Government's Collaboration with Anthropology and Occupational Therapy to Preserve Indigenous History and Promote Tribal Goals

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Postcolonial and indigenous scholars suggest that creating alternative histories is a necessary activity for Native peoples in their recovery from the destructive emotional, behavioral, and political effects of colonial domination. The literature on history-making as a restorative process has focused on mental health, reversing negative representations of indigenous people in mainstream histories, and using Native histories to reclaim land and rights. In 2004, the Tule River Indian Tribe of Central California initiated an innovative history project to engage tribal elders in contributing historical information about themselves and their families for preservation by the Tribe. Theories and methods from postcolonial scholarship, anthropology, and occupational therapy (and its academic discipline occupational science) focused the Tule River Tribal History Project on providing meaningful and enjoyable activities—creating family trees, a tribal photo archive, interviews with elders, social gatherings and community discussions, and a website. The products were made available to participants in digital and printed formats. Copies have since been archived by the Tribal Council and also made available for tribal use at the Towanits Education Center on the Tule River Reservation. Pre-test and post-test survey data indicate: (1) the tribal elders' high valuation of the history-making activities; and (2) the positive impact of the program on social integration and spiritual well-being.

Key words: Native Americans, postcolonialism, indigenous, aging, intergenerational trauma, historical trauma

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Introduction

In 2004, the Tule River Tribal Council undertook an innovative project to preserve the history of the Tule River Tribe. The Tule River Tribal History Project was implemented by integrating the expertise of three sets of partners. These included: (1) the Tule River Tribal Council, and the Tule River Tribal Elders as a membership organization within the Tribe; (2) an anthropological consultant; and (3) a staff of occupational therapists. The task for anthropology was to provide a scholarly framework to key periods, events, and literature related to the tribe's history, to help access archival records, and to broker relationships and the flow information within the tribe. The anthropologist was a figure known to members of the community for about 30 years. The task for occupational therapy was to quickly and effectively facilitate tribal elders' participation in the project by engaging them in history-making activities.

The rationale for the tribal history project, and more information about its interdisciplinary background, appear in recent publications (Frank 2007; Frank et al. 2008; see also Frank, Block, and Zemke 2008; Frank and Zemke 2008). A particularly salient part of the rationale focuses on anthropology's increased collaboration with tribes to achieve indigenous goals (Field 1999, 2004; Lassiter 2005a, 2005b). In the present article we turn to an evaluation of the Tule River Tribal History Project and the relationship of its findings to claims made by postcolonial and indigenous scholars regarding the importance of history-making to indigenous well-being (Duran, Duran, and Yellow Horse-Brave Heart 1998; Duran 2006; Duran and Duran 1995; also Mihesuah 1998; Smith 1999).

Overview of the Tribal History Project

The Tule River Tribe is comprised of about 1,500 enrolled members. Of these, about 500 members live on the reservation in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, in Central California, about 15 miles from the city of Porterville. The reservation is in the San Joaquin Valley, about midway between Bakersfield and Fresno. At the time of the tribal history project, there were 118 tribal elders (defined as tribal members age 55 or older). Over half of the tribal elders ($N=64$) participated in the project by returning an initial ("pre-test") survey designed to determine their attitudes toward tribal history and the anticipated tribal history project. A subsequent ("post-test") survey followed at the end of the project. The project operated over the course of 12 weeks in Summer 2004.

The Tule River Tribal History was housed temporarily in the AmVets (United States military veterans) trailer on the Tule River Reservation, with permission and at the invitation of the AmVets members. The AmVets trailer was a central location near the tribal government buildings, at the hub of the tribe's business activities. The project maintained a regular weekday schedule five days a week, with some evening hours for working adults, as well as some off-site activities and special events. The project staff included a mix of indigenous and non-indigenous workers: the project director (an anthropologist, non-indigenous), the tribal coordinator (the immediate past-Tribal Council Chairman, indigenous), a part-time videographer (non-indigenous), and five occupational therapists (non-indigenous) who were graduate students at the University of California, Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy.

Four of the occupational therapy staff were advanced masters students completing their two-year entry-level professional degree program at the University of Southern California (USC). They had finished their coursework, applied, and had been accepted to participate in the Tule River Tribal History Project as the site where they fulfilled their final, 12-week supervised clinical fieldwork. These four were supervised by a registered, licensed occupational therapist enrolled in the USC doctoral program. This experienced clinician (third author, Heather J. Kitching) served as assistant project director and as fieldwork supervisor, a role governed by national standards of

the occupational therapy profession (Kitching et al. 2004; Taguchi-Meyer, Kitching, and Frank 2005). Although none of these four staff members had worked previously in a Native American community, they drew effectively on their professional training and personal experience to meet important expectations of all occupational therapy practice: to developing treatments suited to the specific needs of the patient or client, whether an individual or a community.

The occupational therapy approach at Tule River built on a preventative orientation in the profession concerned with enhancing wellness through meaningful, purposeful activity (Clark et al. 1991; Yerxa et al. 1990). The Tule River Tribal History Project was approved to meet the 12-week "clinical fieldwork" requirement; this was understood to be a "non-traditional fieldwork site"—that is, a non-medical setting. The tribal elders were never considered "cases" or "patients." Rather, the client was the tribal government and the tribal elders. The project was designed to meet tribal goals. The professional training of the staff, however, allowed them to construct and design activities that were well suited and appropriate to the cognitive and physical functioning of the tribal elders. This sensitivity and knowledge base also allowed the staff to work effectively with tribal members of all ages, including teenagers and school age children, adjusting activities to their developmental capacities and interests.

The accomplishments of the staff were impressive in devising culturally-specific protocols. The community, in turn, embraced them. The four interns who had the closest daily contact with the community were enthusiastic, likeable young women in their early to mid-twenties. Three of the four interns had had extensive cross-cultural experience through family migration (India, Fiji, China), Peace Corps service (Turkmenistan), and extended travel abroad (Europe, Asia). The fourth came from a rural background in the United States and had majored in anthropology as an undergraduate. Her experience with the pace and style of rural life was an asset in relating to the tribal elders in the rural reservation setting.

At the conclusion of the project, tribal elders expressed an extremely high level of confidence that the history project could help to preserve the tribe's history and support other tribal goals. The staff had helped 40 tribal members of all ages, many of them working in pairs across generations to create family trees. Staff assisted 29 tribal members to digitally scan their family photos, some dating to around 1900, into a tribal photo archive and to index them. About 2,000 images were archived in collections bearing the contributor's name. Video interviews with nine of the eldest tribal members were recorded and transcribed, with family members helping to conduct the interview in some instances. Nine weekly roundtable talks were videotaped on topics related to tribal history. These were framed as social occasions where a catered lunch or potluck was served. A tribal history website was launched (www.tulriver.org). Transcripts of interviews and digital copies were made of all the deliverables from the project. Tribal elders and other tribal members received a personal copy of the materials they contributed.

The results of the evaluation presented below point to the power of a collective task, and in particular, the production of tribal history, to build bridges between the generations and across diverse families. The outcomes of the project resonate with postcolonial and indigenous claims that creating alternative histories can play an important part in the recovery of Native people from the negative effects of colonial domination. History-making activities, apart from their narrative content, appear to have recuperative effects for tribal integration. These healing effects flow from the activities themselves and the opportunities they afford for meaningful social engagement, rather than from any specific or agreed-upon content. Tule River Tribal Council fostered this collaboration among tribal members by providing attractive opportunities for them to contribute information and images that were culturally relevant as well as personally meaningful.

Postcolonialism, Indigenous Health, and Occupational Therapy: Mainstream Histories and Alternative History-Making

Preserving the history of the Tule River Tribe has been an official goal of the tribal government for about three decades, since the Tule River Tribal Council's adoption of a strategic five-year plan in the early 1970s (Tule River Tribal Council 1972). Since then, some tribal members have recorded personal accounts or interviewed tribal elders but a compilation of such materials is needed (cf. Nenna 1984). Many tribal members have also actively researched their family histories and retained copies of archival documents, especially the information-rich applications submitted for inclusion in the 1928 California Indian Roll. Histories also have been produced for the Tribe by anthropological and historical consultants to support claims to land, water, and federal services by paid consultants, including some by the first author (Frank 1980, 2005a, 2005b, 2006). Such reports based on archival sources are produced with tribal review and approval, but usually by professionals who were neither tribal members nor indigenous. They do not usually circulate apart from among the members of the Tribal Council, and they do not fill the need described by postcolonial and indigenous scholars for narrative self-representation.

A major tribal initiative to produce a popular history was finally mounted in 2002. The Tule River Tribal Council committed funds to engage an anthropologist consultant (first author, Gelya Frank) to produce a tabloid-style newspaper insert for the Sunday edition of the county's three main newspapers (Tule River Tribal Council 2002). The 20-page full-color publication was timed to coincide with the Tulare County 150 Year Celebration. Framed as a "commemoration" of the county's history rather than a "celebration," the publication had the character foremost of a self-presentation by the Tule River Tribe. The publication put the narrative authority of the tribal government and tribal members into the foreground (Clifford 1983). This strategy marked a deliberate break with locally known books by writer

Frank Latta (1977), who interviewed people on the Tule River Reservation around 1925 to 1965, and by professional anthropologists. A. L. Kroeber (1925) conducted fieldwork at Tule River in 1903 and 1906. His student A. H. Gayton (1948) conducted fieldwork there in the 1920s.

The Tribal Council's news publication featured articles and photographs contributed by tribal members about preserving the Yokuts language and its dialects. It included reprints and commentary on materials previously published by the Tulare County Historical Society, including a lengthy and important interview in 1948 with tribal elder José Vera. It offered information about the tribal government's organization and sovereign powers, and it presented the Tribe's perspective on tribal gaming and information about the federal trust status of reservation land. The publication also included photos of the Tribal Council's nine members and blurbs about their long-term goals. Finally, the publication included a previously unpublished interview with Alotha Santos, a tribal elder related to many families in the Tribe, who was interviewed by the anthropologist in the 1970s, and a comprehensive history of the reservation by the same author. Before publication, all content was reviewed and authorized by the Tribal Council and, where called for, by representatives of specific families. Some 37,000 households in Tulare County received the publication.

This effort by the Tule River Tribal Council received excellent word-of-mouth reviews among the members of the tribe and is still used by the Tribal Council as an informational brochure. On the strength of this achievement, then-Tribal Council Chairman Duane M. Garfield, Sr. informally sought a bid from the anthropologist to write a popular history of the Tribe. In keeping with postcolonial perspectives circulating in contemporary anthropology, the consultant proposed a project to engage tribal members in compiling their history through theory and methods from occupational therapy. The intent was to break out of the mold of anthropology's one-on-one interview approach and promote a more lively and collaborative community effort (Field and Fox 2007). If active community involvement in producing historical materials could be achieved, it was expected to build tribal members' awareness of the project, sense of ownership, access to its products, and use of them.

The field of occupational therapy, while unfamiliar to most anthropologists, may offer a set of methodological and epistemological tools that can help to build active collaboration between anthropologists and the communities where they work. The evaluation of the Tule River Tribal History Project below indicates that occupational therapists can assist tribes and anthropological consultants to mobilize tribal members to achieve tribal goals. The professional orientation and expertise of the occupational therapists focus on selecting and adapting activities to engage the interest of tribal elders, adults, and youth. As a result, tribal elders and their families contributed a remarkable amount of historical information, including photographic images, for sharing among the tribe, in a short 12-week time frame.

Occupational therapy “is based on the belief that the need to engage in occupation is innate and is related to survival, health, well-being, and life satisfaction. Occupational therapy, therefore, is a profession whose focus is on enabling a person (i.e., individual client) or a group of persons (i.e., group, community, or an organization client) to access and participate in activities that are meaningful, purposeful, and relevant to their lives, roles, and sense of well-being” (American Occupational Therapy Association 2000:3). This health profession and its academic discipline, occupational science, seek to promote the use of holistic interventions based on *doing* (Clark et al. 1991; Yerxa et al. 1990). This focus on purposeful selection and guided performance of culturally relevant activities—whether to build skills, regain function, or achieve spiritual goals—is rooted in the 20th century Pragmatist philosophy of John Dewey, Jane Addams, Julia Lathrop, Adolf Meyer, and other social reformers of the Progressive Era (Breines 1986; Frank and Zemke 2008).

Based upon the insights and experiences of occupational therapy in the past few decades, five activities were introduced in the Tule River Tribal History Project to engage tribal elders in documenting the tribe’s history. The activities included: (1) *Making family trees* using Family Tree-Maker genealogy software along with copies of tribal censuses dating back to around 1886 and other documents culled from federal archives; (2) *Creating a tribal photo archive* by digitally scanning elders’ photo collections and recording descriptions of the images in an index; (3) *Participating in videotaped roundtable discussions* related to the tribe’s history in the context of a weekly potluck or catered lunch; (4) *Conducting videotaped interviews with Tribal Elders* and, when possible, encouraging families to assist by conducting the interview; (5) *Constructing a website* for material to be contributed, selected, and approved by the Tribe’s elders.

The Tule River Tribal Council had framed its goal as “preserving” the Tribe’s history. In successive iterations of the proposal, the anthropologist consultant attempted to identify and clarify the possible felt dimensions of this goal. Applying postcolonial theory was useful in thinking about the role of history-making as a methodology for reconstructing positive indigenous identities and healing at the individual and for healing at the collective levels (Smith 1999; also see Duran, Jojola, and Tsosie 2007). Because there were multiple partners in this project, a fuller analysis would be helpful to distinguish when and for whom postcolonial theory was useful, tracing the development of ideas and activities in the project’s trajectory. While the present article cannot take on that task, a published discussion elaborates upon concerns voiced by the Tule River Tribal Elders at various stages, including at the proposal stage and during a site review of the project by the Tribal TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) co-sponsor (Frank 2007). Important to note, the Tribal Elders were cautious and cast a divided vote. The decision to fund the project and seek Tribal TANF co-sponsorship rested with the Tule River Tribal Council, as the contracting agent with the anthropology and occupational therapy partners.

The term *postcolonialism* does not refer to a situation in which colonialism is over and done with. Rather, it refers to a critical stance that opposes the political and economic domination of sovereign Native peoples, notably by nation-states that grant superior rights to settler populations. Postcolonialism gives “equal weight to outward historical circumstances and to the ways in which those circumstances are experienced by postcolonial subjects” (Young 2001:58). As South Asian critic Homi Bhaba has noted, postcolonial social criticism targets precisely the unequal processes of *representation* by which the experiences of formerly colonized peoples are framed by the dominant society (Duran and Duran 1995). Closer to the ground, however, varying perspectives and accounts within tribal communities will be found, as in any constituency. In a postcolonial study of Tule River Tribal sovereignty across three centuries (Frank and Goldber, in press), this problem was closely addressed theoretical and methodologically, while striving to portray the Tule River Tribe as a collective agent and protagonist of the Tribe’s history, without suppressing an account of internal diversity.

Native American clinician scholars Eduardo Duran, Bonnie Duran, Maria Yellow Horse-Brave Heart, and others have begun to treat the behavioral health effects of colonization in North America under the rubrics of *intergenerational trauma* and *historical trauma* (Duran, Duran, and Yellow Horse-Brave Heart 1998; Duran 2006; Duran and Duran 1995). Their work with indigenous patients and clients views the ruptures to Native societies caused by colonization as the root cause of the high rates of alcoholism, drug addiction, and addiction to unhealthful food leading to metabolic disorders such as diabetes, depression, self-destructive acts, and violence against others that afflict Native communities. These assertions by clinicians and critics are well supported by public health data for indigenous populations (Manson 2004).

Recent studies by anthropologists on the Flathead Reservation in Montana (O’Neill 1996) and with Yurok tribal members in Northwestern California (Buckley 2002) also point to the intergenerational psychological or spiritual effects of the colonization experience. Working on the Flathead Reservation, O’Neill (1996) views the extremely high rate of self-reported depression as a symptom of Native oppression historically. Intergenerational effects are implied by O’Neill’s exploration of the distinctive cultural meaning that depression has acquired over time in the moral imagination of the Flathead community. Flathead narratives indicate how historical and personal loss is woven together to create a cultural identity. Depression is acknowledged as a core feature of life and given meaning by conferring responsibility to treat others compassionately. In Buckley’s (2002) account from Northwestern California, members of the Yurok tribe also recognize symptoms of melancholy that they view as historically induced. Over time the Yurok have developed a set of rigorous, disciplined spiritual practices to deal with this affliction (Buckley 2002).

In *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999)

argues for Native people to set new agendas for indigenous research and negotiate new relationships with non-indigenous researchers. She does not exclude non-indigenous researchers from the possibility of conducting useful, postcolonial research in collaboration with Native communities. Instead, she outlines “Twenty-five Indigenous Projects” and a set of strategies to foreground indigenous perspectives in each. Smith’s list of Indigenous Projects underscores the importance of history-making to the collective health and well-being of Native people: *Claiming, Testimonies, Story-telling, Celebrating survival, Remembering, Indigenizing, Intervening, Revitalizing, Connecting, Reading, Writing, Representing, Gendering, Envisioning, Reframing, Restoring, Returning, Democratizing, Networking, Naming, Protecting, Creating, Negotiating, Discovering, and Sharing.*

In preserving the history of a tribe, as has been suggested in other areas of anthropological research, the discipline may have become somewhat limited by its overarching focus on the production of texts such as books and journal articles, and spectator products such as films, as compared to applied projects (Rylko-Bauer, Singer, and van Willigen 2006) and other kinds of embodied, collaborative, and performance-based activities (Tedlock 2002, 2008). The production of cultural and historical data has been shaped also by the limited economy of the single fieldworker equipped with a tape recorder, prepared to turn speech into text. By changing the relations by which indigenous histories are produced and displayed, more than the archiving of information may result, and a community may also be helped to change in ways it desires (Lassiter 2000, 2005a, 2005b).

Under the rubric of *Intervening*, Smith calls for projects that mold themselves to the needs of Native people, rather than molding Native people to the conventions of academic research. Advocating action research, Smith (1999:147) writes:

Intervening takes action research to mean literally the process of being proactive and becoming involved as an interested worker for change. The indigenous intervening project carries with it some working principles. For example, the community itself invites the project in and sets out its parameters. The various departments and agencies involved in such a project are also expected to be willing to change themselves in some way, redirect policy, design new programs, or train staff differently. Intervening is directed then at changing institutions which deal with indigenous peoples and not at changing indigenous peoples to fit the structures.

Colonization and Survival of Native Californians: Ruptures in the History of the Tule River Tribe

Native people in Central California experienced three phases of colonization—the Spanish, Mexican, and American. While the Spanish missions and *presidios* (military installations) were located in the coastal portion of the state, their presence was felt among the Yokuts tribes who comprised

the dominant population of the region. The Spanish period began in 1769, with the establishment of the coastal missions that imposed Christianity and severe discipline upon Native peoples (Jackson and Castillo 1995). The colonial rulers also regulated the lives of non-mission Indians on lands controlled by the Spanish with an array of institutions under which Natives were free to move around and own property, and had access to the courts, but were punished for idleness and forced to continually labor. Some known ancestors of the Tule River Tribe were at missions such as San Fernando and San Miguel.

A new period began in 1821, with Mexican independence and secularization of the missions (Hurtado 1988; Rawls 1984). Captive Native populations were freed but they remained enmeshed in a system of debt peonage by which Indians living in villages on lands granted to Hispanics were obliged to provide labor for their landlords. Native people retained the right to occupy their villages and to hunt or collect foods in their traditional homelands, even if incorporated within Spanish or Mexican land grants. Spanish became the second language of Yokuts men who worked as *vaqueros* (cowboys) on ranches. When the Tule River Reservation was established in 1856, the Tule River Indians generally were Spanish-speaking, including men and women, and had Spanish as well as Indian names. Use of the Spanish language persisted well into the American period.

The American occupation of California following the Mexican-American War resulted in the most rapid and severe dispossession of land, cultural disruption, and decline in Native population in all of North America (Hurtado 1988; Rawls 1984). California became a territory of the United States in 1848. The discovery of gold that year attracted prospectors bent on exploiting the natural resources of the land. California became a state in 1850. Demographer Sherburne F. Cook (1976) estimated that 20 percent of the Native population of California was lost in just the first four years of the American invasion—plummeting between 1848 and 1852 from 71,050 to 60,450. By 1880, the Native population stood at 12,500, or 17 percent of its strength at the start of the Gold Rush (Ibid. 351).

California statehood actually worsened the legal status of the indigenous survivors. In 1851, the California legislature passed a law for the putative protection of Indians that took away their status as free citizens under the Spanish and Mexican regimes (Hurtado 1988; Rawls 1984). The law denied them access to the courts and subjected adults and children as individuals to involuntary servitude amounting to slavery. Federal courts refused to uphold the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed in 1848, which explicitly granted Indians the right to remain in their villages and to use their traditional homelands in customary ways. The dispossessed tribes were vulnerable to starvation and mortality from alien diseases. Natives were hunted, shot, and killed with impunity. The words “extermination,” “genocide,” and “Holocaust” have been used to describe these events (Heizer 1974; Kroeber and Kroeber 2003; Norton 1979; Rawls 1984; Trafzer and Hyer 1999; also see Stannard 1992; Thornton 1987).

In 1851, the federal government negotiated a set of 18 treaties with the California tribes, including with representatives of some of the Yokuts tribes in the region about the Tule River. Responding to opposition from the California delegation, however, the Senate departed from its policy elsewhere in the country of negotiating treaties with the tribes. It shelved the treaties without ratifying them. Instead, in 1853, Congress authorized five military reservations in California, starting with the Tejon Reservation at the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley. Established in 1854, the Tejon Reservation included numerous bands from among local tribes who agreed to resettle there and contribute collective agricultural labor in return for federal protection (Phillips 2004).

In June 1856, settlers along the Tule River, about 120 miles north of the Tejon Reservation, instigated a war against the local Yokuts tribes and defeated them (Frank and Goldberg 2008; Mitchell 1966; Stewart 1884). By September, the government located a new reservation on the fertile banks of the Tule River under the administration of the Tejon Reservation, ordering the survivors to gather and remain there. The Indians were taught agriculture and soon they had the most productive farm under the Indian Service in California. However, a government clerk from the Tejon Reservation, Thomas Madden, gained title to the reservation by fraud and began charging the government an exorbitant yearly rental.

To resolve this anomaly and avoid further expense, the government moved the Tule River Indian Reservation to its present location by Executive Order of January 9, 1873. The relocation could not be accomplished immediately, however. The new tract was inferior agriculturally to the farm, and only a few families could be persuaded to leave their old homes voluntarily. To complicate matters, the status of the new reservation was not clear even to the local Indian agent. A second executive order on October 3, 1873 had doubled the size of the reservation, adding improved land for farming on the northern border. But settlers on this tract had not been compensated for their land and were actively petitioning the federal government for compensation.

With the northern tract still in dispute, the government finally brought a military escort in December 1876 to force the Tule River Indians to abandon the Madden Farm and relocate to the new reservation within the boundaries established by the first executive order. Two years later, in 1878, the second executive order was rescinded, leaving the Tule River Indians with a rocky mountainous tract where they eventually gave up farming in favor of raising livestock, logging, and seasonal wage labor. The reservation population quickly dwindled to about 150 members through attrition seemingly tied to the scarcity of arable land and the government's land assignment policy.

In 1885, Congress began to pass laws and the Supreme Court upheld rulings that systematically suppressed the existence of the tribes with policies intended to break up collective land tenure, self-governance, and social organization.

Native religions were suppressed and Native children sent to boarding schools to be "civilized" by imposing military discipline, teaching them manual trades and prohibiting their use of Native languages. The Tule River Indians experienced these policies, resisted them in many instances, and adapted to them when necessary (Frank and Goldberg 2008). The crisis of maintaining indigenous languages is acute, with an active language preservation program (Hinton 1994; Hinton, Vera, and Steele 2002). Fluent Yokuts speakers among the enrolled members of the Tule River Tribe are few, perhaps 10 speakers.

Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) in 1934, under the New Deal administration of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, reversing the thrust of Indian policy aimed at destroying the tribes. Instead, tribal governments were recognized and reorganized through a massive effort by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to establish American-style governments on the reservations. The tribal constitutions and bylaws adopted under the IRA were often at odds with traditional indigenous forms of social organization and authority (Biolsi 1992; Fowler 2002). At Tule River, for example, the Tribal Council was reluctant to use its coercive powers to enforce majority votes on key issues that would divide the membership (Frank and Goldberg 2008).

In the 1950s, the federal government terminated many smaller reservations and rancherias in California and also divested itself of its responsibility to provide for health, social welfare, education, and administration of justice to Indians by contracting with the state under Public Law 280 (Goldberg-Ambrose 1997). As a consequence of Public Law 280, passed in 1953, California's tribal peoples have lagged and continue to lag behind Native people in non-Public Law 280 states in developing institutions of self-government such as tribal courts and other institutions that represent Native peoples and cultures.

In 1987, the United States Supreme Court in *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians* upheld the sovereign right of tribes throughout the nation to sponsor casino-style gambling activities on reservation lands, despite opposition from the states where the reservations might be located (Darian-Smith 2003; Light and Rand 2005; Mullis and Kamper 2000). Since that time, the California tribes have entered the gaming era, with present total revenue of more than \$5 billion a year. The Tule River Tribal Council's use of its net gaming revenues follows the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988 to: (1) fund Tribal government services, operations, and programs; (2) provide Tribal general welfare; (3) promote Tribal economic development; (4) make charitable donations; and (5) help fund local government agencies.

As a recent 10-year review of the impact of tribal gaming shows, more than a century and a half of cultural disruption and economic disparities are not suddenly overturned by an influx of dollars (Taylor and Kalt 2005). The deleterious legacy of colonialism persists. Consequently, as the National Indian Gaming Association (2005) reports, its 168 member

tribal governments spend their gaming profits for education, child and elder care, cultural preservation, charitable donations, and other purposes (20%); economic development (19%); health care (17%); police and fire protection (17%); infrastructure (16%); and housing (11%).

Programs for cultural preservation are particularly interesting to study, given the tendency of non-indigenous observers to assert that Native people are “losing their culture” as a result of their wealth. As anthropologist Jessica Cattelino (2008) argues, such changes allow us to see how money operates in a classical sense as a fungible medium for expressing cultural values. Further, while some casinos in California and elsewhere in the country are hugely profitable industries on the style of Las Vegas hotel resorts, Tule River’s Eagle Mt. Casino is a modest gaming operation in a remote location that produces modest profits. Such profits have allowed the Tule River Tribal Council, however, to fund its own projects to improve the wellbeing of the Tribe and meet longstanding goals such as the preservation of the tribe’s history.

The Tule River Tribal History Project budget was \$86,500, including housing for the project staff, project equipment, materials and supplies, transfer and copying of digital and print media, transcription of audio tapes, and consultant fees. The Tribal Council provided about half of the initial funding, while the other half came from a prevention grant through Tribal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), administered by the Owens Valley Career Development Corporation, a consortium of eight tribal governments. Another \$10,000 was allocated in 2006 to complete the production of multiple copies of the deliverables for distribution, tribal access, and archiving, as well as to transition the project to management by the Tribal Council.

Evaluation of the Tule River Tribal History Project

The evaluation of the project was designed and conducted by a social psychologist specializing in measurement (second author, Sheila Murphy). The project’s immediate objectives included obtaining a physical record of the Tule River Tribe’s history. The overarching objectives, however, were more inclusive and were aimed at providing information to support positive family and tribal identity for members of the tribe, as well as relationships across families and across age groups. The evaluation focused on these more overarching goals. Two independent surveys of tribal elders were conducted in order to assess the extent to which the objectives were achieved. The status of tribal elder refers to enrolled members of the Tule River Tribe who are age 55 or older. Tribal elder status is a mark of respect and also confers certain tribal benefits including a monthly income supplement.

The two evaluations surveys were designed to assess the initial perceptions and changes in perceptions among the tribal elders concerning the tribal history project. The first (“pre-test”) survey was administered in late May and early June 2004, just prior to the start up of the project activities. This

pre-test survey provided important baseline data. The second (“post-test”) survey was administered after the conclusion of project activities, in late August and early September 2004. The surveys tapped the following domains: (1) Tribal elders’ interest, expectations, and level of participation in the history project; (2) their amount and quality of engagement in specific activities in the project; (3) impact of the project on their communication and relationships within and between families; (4) impact of the project on the amount of information available in the tribe; (5) potential health-related benefits of participation for tribal elders as individuals; and (6) tribal elders’ overall assessment of the project.

Both the pre-test survey and post-test survey were self-administered using paper and pencil. They were distributed to 118 eligible tribal elders. Sixty-four elders, or 54 percent of those who received the pre-test survey, returned a completed survey. The post-test survey was distributed and collected somewhat more hastily at the conclusion of the project. It was completed by 39 elders, or by 33 percent of those who received it. Participation in the survey was strictly voluntary. Respondents who did complete a survey were entered into a raffle for one of several Wal-Mart gift certificates. All surveys were anonymous—elders’ names were never directly associated with their responses. Matching of the pre-test and post-test surveys was accomplished using a numeric code assigned to envelopes containing the surveys.

We use the term “full sample” to refer to the data set containing all respondents who completed the pre-test survey, the post-test survey, or both. Our evaluation focuses, however, on the subset of 30 tribal elders who completed both the pre-test and post-test surveys. This “matched sample” was constituted by tracking the numbers assigned to the envelopes in which each survey was distributed. The matched sample ($N=30$) made it possible to examine change at the individual as well as group level, making a more compelling causal case for the impact of the program. It is important to note, however, that the full and matched sample were virtually identical demographically. More specifically, 45 percent of both the full and matched sample were male, the average age of both samples was 66 years old, 53 percent of full sample currently lived on the reservation compared to 54 percent of the matched sample, and the average number of years lived off the reservation was 53 years in both samples.

Versions of most questions were included in both the pre-test and post-test surveys. The obvious exception to this involves items that asked respondents to assess their experiences with the project. These evaluation questions were only included on the post-test survey. Most questions involved the use of a 10-point Likert scale, with responses typically ranging from *Not at all* (1) to *Very* (10), or *Very bad* (1) to *Very good* (10). In general, lower numbers were more negative, and higher numbers were more positive. Comparisons between the pre-test and post-test were subjected to a paired student’s t-test. The results follow with occasional clarifying comments.

Tribal Elders' Interest, Expectations, and Level of Participation

Importance of Tribal History

The tribal elders felt that preserving tribal history was of the utmost importance with an average importance score of 9.67 out of 10 at pre-test and 9.74 at post-test. They gave similarly high ratings to the extent to which they felt that tribal history contributes to pride in native identity (9.87 at pre-test and 9.74 at post-test). They attached a similar degree of importance to knowing tribal history for youth to become Tribal Council members (9.23 at pre-test and 9.67 at post-test), a distinct likelihood for many youth during adulthood because of the relatively small pool of candidates living on the reservation. Overall, the ratings for all three dimensions were high, all with ratings of over 9 out of 10.

Perceived Impact on Tribal Youth

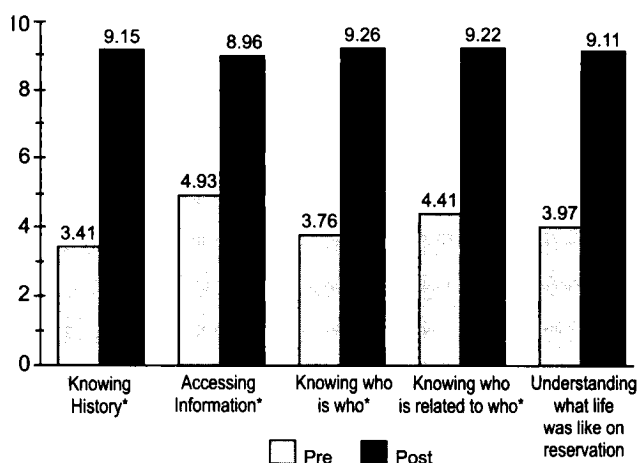
A comparison of pre-test and post-test ratings showed a tremendous increase in the elders' assessment of the capacity of the tribal history project to affect tribal youth's knowledge about the history of the tribe. The average pre-test rating was 3.75 while the average post-test rating was 9.11—a more than five-point average increase. Similarly dramatic and statistically significant increases from pre-test to post-test were also reported on several related topics. Tribal elders' assessment of the capacity of the tribal history program to increase the access of tribal youth to information about the tribe rose from 4.84 pre-test to 8.74 post-test. Their rating of the capacity of the project to assist tribal youth in recognizing the people in old photographs rose from 3.90 pre-test to 9.00 post-test. The elders' rating of the capacity of the project to affect knowledge among tribal youth of family and interfamily relationships rose from 4.81 pre-test to 9.14 post-test. Their rating of the project's capacity to increase the understanding of tribal youth concerning life on the reservation a long time ago rose from 4.15 pre-test to 9.06 post-test.

Amount and Quality of Engagement in Specific Activities

Tribal Elders' Actual Participation

An analysis of the post-test survey revealed that the level of participation was strong for each of the project activities. Seventy-eight percent of respondents reported that they had participated in at least one project activity. Potlucks were the most popular activity with 58 percent of survey respondents participating, which adds support for the strategy of combining videotaped roundtable discussions with potlucks and catered lunches. Roundtable discussions were the second most popular, attended by 52 percent of respondents. Working on photo archives and the tribal website both drew 46 percent of respondents. Tribal elders reported lowest degree of participation (44%) in both video interviews and making family trees. But, in fact, family trees became one of the most productive activities overall, due to the participation of youth and adults.

Figure 1. Perceived Future Impact of the Project on Tribal Youth



* All variables significantly different at $p < .001$

The generational "digital divide" was in evidence in this finding. Young adults, teenagers, and school-age children were familiar with computers. They became the primary users of the family tree software, along with a few adults who took the opportunity to learn to use computers for the first time. Youth and adults were frequently seen working in pairs, however, with the tribal elders. On the post-test, between 44 percent and 58 percent of the respondents reported that they had participated in each one of the project activities. In other words, participation was quite evenly spread across activities.

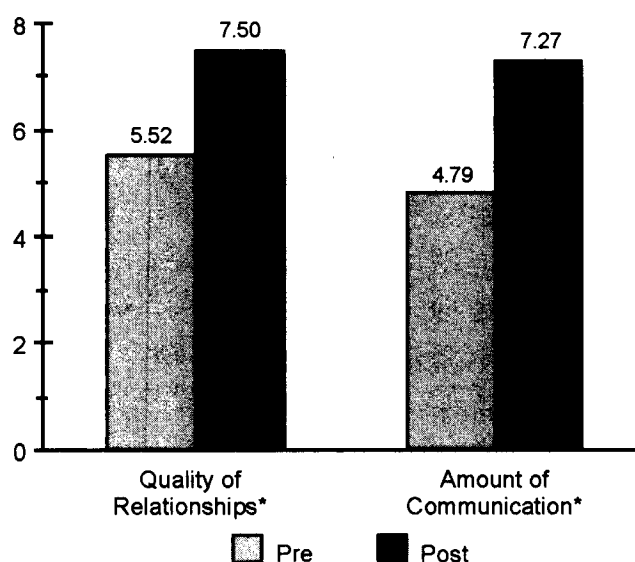
Interest in Participating in Specific Activities

Overall, respondents reported a high level of interest in participating in project activities. At pre-test, the greatest interest was in elders' potluck events (an average of 8.73 out of 10), family tree making (8.62) and roundtable discussions (8.10). Interest in these events remained high at post-test (8.23 for potlucks, 8.65 for family tree-making, and 7.96 for roundtable discussions). Interestingly, the three activities that had a lower initial level of interest at pre-test each showed a statistically significant increase in respondents' reported level of interest at post-test—the elders' video interviews (7.07 at pre-test to 8.00 at post-test), the digital photo archive (6.58 at pre-test to 8.26 post-test), and working on the Tule River Heritage Website (6.00 at pre-test to 7.46 at post-test). The results suggest that exposure to the activities promoted an increased desire to participate in similar activities in the future.

Interest in Participating in Specific Activities as a Function of Living On or Off the Reservation

At the time of the tribal history project, the residential pattern among the tribal elders ($N=118$) was as follows: Living on the reservation ($N=54$); living in Porterville ($N=32$); living elsewhere in Tulare County ($N=10$); living out of Tulare County

Figure 2. Perceived Impact of the Project on Relations Between Elders and Younger Generations



*All variables significantly different at $p < .001$

($N=21$); unaccounted for ($N=1$). In other words, slightly less than half of the tribe's elders ($N=54$) were living on the reservation, while slightly more than half ($N=63$) were living off.

Respondents to the post-test survey were almost evenly split between those who currently lived on the reservation (54%) and those currently living off the reservation (46%). Both groups were extremely interested in participating in similar activities in the future with each of the six activities receiving an average score of over 7 out of 10. Interest was generally higher among those currently living off the reservation with respect to five out of six kinds of activities offered by the project: potlucks, roundtable discussions, video interviews, photo archives, and the website. However, this disparity reached statistical significance only with respect to participating in the tribal website in the future (8.06 for respondents living off the reservation compared to 7.10 for those living on the reservation).

Rating of Activities as a Result of Participation

Tribal elders who actually participated in a specific activity rated the activity more highly than those who had not participated. This effect held across the activities, so that average scores for activities among those who actually participated in them were all high, ranging from 8.44 to 9.25 on a 10-point scale.

Impact on Communication and Relationships within and between Families

Relationships and Communication Across Generations

Participation in project activities was also seen to significantly improve relationships and communication between tribal elders and younger tribal members (Figure 2).

At pre-test, the tribal elders were asked to predict the impact that the tribal history project would have on such relationships and communication. They rated the likely impact of the project on their relationship with tribal youth at an average of 5.52 on a 10-point scale. At the post-test, tribal elders rated the impact of the program at an average of 7.50. Similarly, the tribal elder's rating of the impact of the program on the amount of communication they experienced with tribal youth rose from an average of 4.79 pre to 7.27. In short, the project far exceeded the tribal elders' expectations.

Communication Within and Between Families

Tribal elders reported on the post-test that the project had stimulated conversation regarding tribal history within their own family generally (7.30 on a 10-point scale) and with tribal youth in their family (6.56). The project also stimulated conversation with other families (7.33) and with tribal members with whom the tribal elders usually don't talk (6.85). Observations of the project allow us to add some context about this point. The project clearly fostered conversations among people who don't usually talk to one another because of longstanding rifts or tensions over such issues as land use, inheritance, tribal membership, and other problems that relate ultimately to colonization and its legacy in the context of living on the Tule River Reservation. On the other hand, many conversations took place because of the opportunity simply to interact with people outside of the elders' set routines.

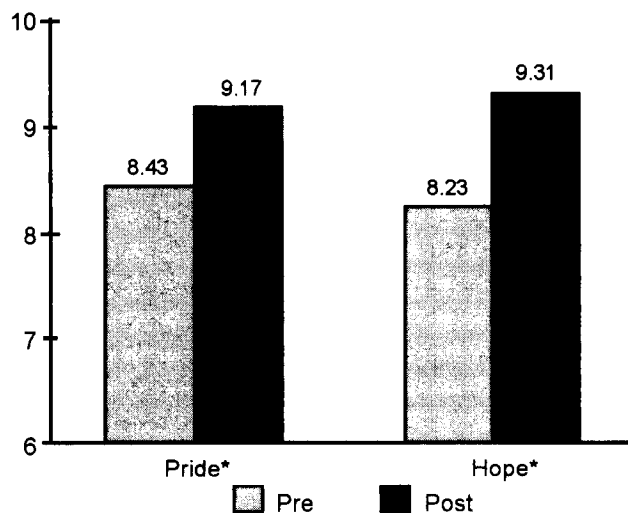
The tribal history project became a meeting place where it was possible to find people of different ages and family backgrounds dropping in to spend a few minutes or hours. Free coffee, cool drinks, and sandwiches were an attraction provided daily by the staff; the offer of food gave the project a means to invite tribal elders and other tribal members to drop by, without obligation to participate, and see its activities. The tribal history project became an alternative public setting to the restaurant at the Eagle Mt. Casino where tribal elders also received free meals. It acquired the quality of a thriving intergenerational center serving the families of the community not unlike the old-fashioned general store or post office, but differed from those venues because of its emphasis on positive contributions to a common purpose. As Tribal Elder Ruby Bays commented, "We haven't had anything like this for a long time to bring the community together."

Impact on the Amount of Information Available in the Tribe

Amount of Information that Tribal Elders Did or Could Contribute

Post-test ratings revealed that the majority of respondents said they had personally contributed quite a lot of information to the project (an average of 6.70 out of 10). Perhaps even more interesting is that respondents said they felt they could contribute even more to the tribal history in the future (an average of 7.74).

Figure 3. Pride and Hope in Tribe's Future



*Implies significant difference at $p < .05$

Increase in knowledge

A majority of the tribal elders reported that they had learned something new about their own family as a result of the project (an average of 6.26). They also felt that others had learned something about their family (an average of 7.33).

Potential Health-related Benefits of Participation for Tribal Elders as Individuals

Pride and Hope

As shown in Figure 3, ratings of pride showed a statistically significant increase from pre-test to post-test (8.43 to 9.17). Hope for the tribe's future showed an even greater increase from pre-test to post-test (8.23 to 9.31). Statistical significance, in this case, means that the chance that the increase in pride came from a source other than the Tule River Tribal History Project is only five out of 100.

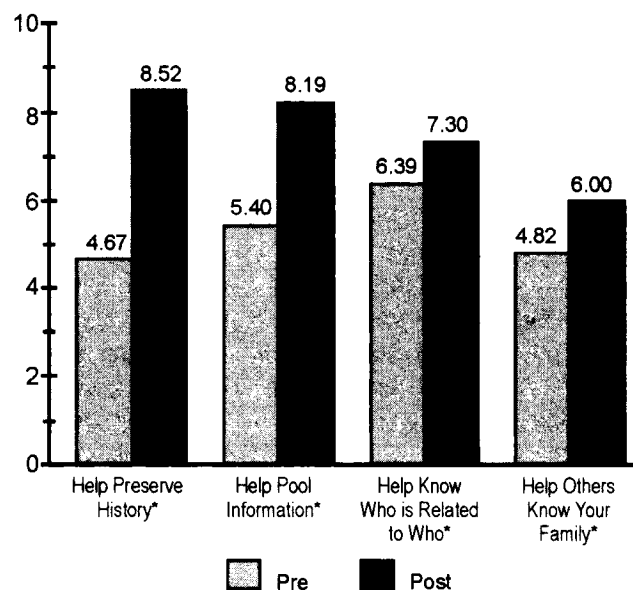
Mood and General Health

Pre-test and post-test comparisons of participating tribal elders' mood showed no relationship between mood and participation. In fact, the tribal elders' reported mood was quite high throughout (7.93 pre to 8.08 post). However, the tribal elders surveyed did report a marginally significant improvement in their general health (7.02 pre-test to 7.58 post-test) at the .07 level of significance. In other words, the chance that the improvement in health was unrelated to the tribal history project is only seven in 100.

Tribal Elders' Overall Assessment of the Project

The project greatly exceeded respondents' expectations with respect to preserving tribal history (5.13 out of 10 at pre-test, to 8.46 at post-test). The project also exceeded expectations

Figure 4. Overall Evaluation of the Tule River Tribal History Project



*Implies significant difference at $p < .05$

with respect to three anticipated areas of importance: helping tribal members pool information (5.70 pre-test to 8.23 post-test); helping people to know who is related to whom in the tribe (6.92 pre to 7.71 post); and helping other tribal members to know the respondent's family history (5.05 pre to 6.26 post).

Implications for Future Projects and Research

As indigenous people enact their recovery from the debilitating effects of colonization, anthropologists are taking more active, collaborative roles to assist them in achieving tribal goals (Field 1999, 2004; also see Biolsi and Zimmerman 1997). This trend is driven significantly by indigenous demands for accountability by scholars who wish to conduct research among Native people. Tribal governments are increasingly likely to exercise authority over research, as well as to design their own cultural and historical preservation projects, for which they may hire anthropologists and other professionals as consultants (Champagne and Goldberg 2005).

The evaluation of the Tule River Tribal History Project indicates that adding a third partner, occupational therapy, can assist tribes and anthropological consultants to motivate and orchestrate participation of tribal members in enjoyable activities to achieve tribal goals. The occupational therapists' professional training and experiences focuses on collaborating with clients to select and adapt activities that will engage their interest. In the Tule River Tribal History Project, engagement in the five key activities began with a few tribal elders, spreading by word of mouth to other tribal elders and eventually including adults of all ages and tribal youth.

The tribal members' engagement over a short but intensive 12-week time frame resulted in the tribal elders and their families contributing an impressive amount of historical information to the present digital archive housed in the Towns Indian Education Center on the Tule River Reservation. A matched sample of 30 Tule River tribal elders who participated in both the "pre-test" and "post-test" survey found the project activities enjoyable and valuable. The matched sample reported strong interest in participating in similar activities in the future and felt that they personally had more information yet to share than already contributed.

Further, the positive effects of the project went beyond the compilation of historical information to meet underlying tribal goals. The results have special relevance to postcolonial concerns about healing indigenous communities. First, the matched sample of tribal elders reported a tremendous spike in confidence that the history project could transmit necessary information for tribal youth to function more effectively as members of the tribe and particularly as future members of the Tribal Council. Second, the project fostered positive relationships and communication among tribal members. Tribal elders who participated in the history project reported a significant increase in communication with other tribal members and especially with tribal members to whom they usually do not speak. Finally, tribal elders who participated in the project also reported a significant increase in communication within their family, including with tribal youth, as well as an improvement in the quality of communication. This finding is salient to concerns frequently voiced by tribal elders that tribal youth do not know enough about their heritage.

These evaluations of the Tule River Tribal History Project suggest future applications in indigenous communities. With appropriate adaptations by anthropologists, occupational therapists, and community partners, the model may likely be applied also with people who have suffered disruptions through political repression, other situations of genocide, diaspora, and disaster (cf. Myerhoff 1980, 1992). Again, we highlight the intergenerational and interfamily effects in the context of the reservation community. For 12 weeks, the Tule River Tribal History Project became a general meeting place where people met, talked, and contributed to a common project. Several tribal elders who had previously lacked something to do with their days became regular visitors. Their memories, ability to recognize forgotten faces in photographs, and store of information were suddenly of immediate social value. The image of tribal elders and tribal youth working together at computers to construct family trees is a potent emblem of the project's success in ramping up processes of cultural transmission.

The model of the Tule River Tribal History Project could be applied as a practical intervention in indigenous communities. If so, the authors recommend continuing to develop research that can help to assess the short- and long-range effects of the collaboration among tribal governments,

anthropologists, and occupational therapists in achieving indigenous and postcolonial goals. Measurements over time, and more fine-grained measures, are needed to continue to validate and refine support for a key insight and claim of postcolonial and indigenous scholarship. As has been made clear by the research of Duran and Duran (1995); Duran, Duran, and Yellow Horse-Brave Heart (1998); Duran (2006); Smith (1999), Mihesuah (1998), and others: history-making activities are needed to support indigenous health and well-being at the individual and community levels.

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