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Implementing Montana's Indian-Education-for-All Initiative in a K-5 Public School: Implications for Classroom Teaching, Education Policy, and Native Communities¹

Phyllis Ngai and Peter Koehn

The Montana legislature's requirement that public schools implement programs that fulfill the inclusive Indian education intent found in the state constitution is groundbreaking in U.S. educational history. Supporters of the revived Indian Education for All (IEFA) law agree that including Native perspectives in the mainstream curriculum is long overdue. Advocates often frame IEFA as an initiative that will promote transformative understanding of local American Indian tribes. The data presented in this research report relate to a learner-focused assessment of the model K-5 IEFA program initiated at Lewis and Clark Elementary School in Montana. Did this public school-based IEFA program change attitudes toward American Indians among young learners and therefore potentially improve interracial relationships among Indians and non-Indians? To assess the initiative's impact on student learning and attitudes over two years, one of the authors, working in collaboration with teacher leaders, developed and administered a simple written survey. Survey results indicate that participating students increased their knowledge of the nearby tribe, that the program's impact was considerable in most attitudinal domains, and that differences in individual educators' instructional focus shaped learning outcomes in diverse ways that offer lessons about teacher effectiveness in advancing Montana's education policy affecting Native communities. However, important issues regarding the objectives of IEFA remain to be addressed by Indian and non-Indian advocates and policy makers.

In 1999, the Montana legislature passed state law MCA 20-1-501, known as Indian Education for All (IEFA), requiring that public schools implement programs to fulfill the inclusive Indian education intent found in the 1972 state constitution. Article X, Section 1(2), of Montana's constitution stipulates that the

state “recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural heritage.” Until the end of the 20th century, “this promise was shelved in cupboards across Montana’s educational landscape” (Juneau & Broaddus, 2006, p. 193). Now, all public school students in Montana are expected to learn about the cultures and histories of local American Indian tribes (see *Phi Delta Kappan* special issue, November 2006). From multiple perspectives, this state mandate is groundbreaking in U.S. educational history.

Hopes are high in Montana among American Indian politicians, tribal education leaders, and non-Indian advocates that IEFA will help eradicate racism in public schools and social injustice that affects Native communities in the state. The data presented in this research report relate to a learner-focused assessment of the model K-5 IEFA program initiated at Lewis and Clark (L & C) Elementary School in Montana.² What were the key learning outcomes? In particular, did this public school-based IEFA program change attitudes toward American Indians among young learners and, therefore, potentially improve interracial relationships among Indians and non-Indians? What issues require further attention? In addressing these questions, the analysis presented here focuses on assessing the impact of different teaching approaches.

Implementing Indian Education for All: The OPI Initiative

The 2005 legislature appropriated more than \$7 million to local school districts to help with their implementation efforts and also allotted more than \$3 million to the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) as start-up funding in support of IEFA. While the Montana OPI and American Indian education leaders clearly expressed willingness to support teachers in implementing the new law, the state mandate remained subject to interpretation at the school district and classroom levels. In an effort to promote effective implementation, OPI designated part of its special funding for competitive grant awards of \$25,000 to \$50,000 to design and test innovative Indian education implementation approaches (Juneau & Broaddus, 2006).

As district-based educators embarked on implementing the law, they lacked a unified vision. Different educators had different foci in mind. For instance, Bobby Ann Starnes, author of the lead article in the special issue of *Phi Delta Kappan* on “Indian Education for All: Montana Takes the Lead” (November 2006), maintains that the primary justification for Indian education *for all* is the fact that there is “a prominent gap in [Montana students’] knowledge.” She argues that IEFA is long overdue because Montana students “know almost nothing about the remarkable American Indian leaders who live and have lived within their state’s boundaries.... It is not surprising that most schools — even schools on reservations — emphasize a history and culture that does not include American Indians....The exclusion of Indians from America’s story also excludes them from a prominent place in our collective understanding of the American ‘we’” (pp. 185-186). Historian James Loewen believes that IEFA exerts an even more

transforming impact on non-Native than on Indian children. Learning about the truth can “change how we view history and how we project ourselves into the future” (cited in Jetty, 2006, p. 222). Furthermore, Starnes (2006) posits that, in our increasingly interconnected world, the younger generations need “better honed interaction skills and a broader knowledge base just to live successfully in their environment” than their parents and grandparents needed (p. 188). For Starnes, IEFA “is not the only answer to life in the rapidly changing times ahead, but it is an important beginning” (see also Ngai, 2004, 2007).

While some IEFA advocates are focusing their energy on addressing the question, “Why for all?” in order to diffuse resistance against American Indian education among non-Indians, an equally important question (“How does IEFA affect Native American Indians and their communities?”) requires serious consideration. We argue that malignant stereotypes held by mainstream residents have been responsible, in part, for the history of poisoned interracial relationships in Montana and elsewhere (see Pewewardy, 1998; Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick, 2009). It follows that improved attitudes toward Indian people among the next generation of mainstream learners and their parents are likely to enhance interracial relations among Indians and non-Indians.

The lead author of this article, along with the principal and lead teachers of L & C School, received a \$50,000 grant from OPI to develop and implement an IEFA program with multiple objectives in a mainstream small town elementary school in Montana (Ngai & Koehn, 2010). Here we are principally concerned with the L & C program objective of changing attitudes. Did certain instructional approaches generate positive attitudinal changes among elementary school youth? Did other teaching approaches fall short? What are the implications of our findings for Native communities and future applications of the IEFA initiative in Montana and elsewhere?

In evaluating local implementation of the L & C IEFA K-5 school initiative, we first explore its impact on the acquisition of knowledge about American Indian reservations, culture, and history. We next explore changes in attitudes toward American Indians on a schoolwide comparative basis, at different levels of K-5 education, and across diverse teaching approaches. In the conclusion, we consider the implications of these student-focused findings for future interracial relationships and education policy affecting Native communities.

Program Description and Assessment Method

Teachers and the principal at Lewis and Clark Elementary School in western Montana, the lead author (a University of Montana-Missoula faculty member), and American Indian partners on the Flathead Reservation jointly designed a comprehensive, innovative, and unique program aimed at integrating Native American perspectives throughout the mainstream K-5 curriculum. The program generally linked a place-based approach (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008) to American Indian education with transformative educational objectives (Banks, 2003). A majority of the L & C teaching staff participated in the program design process.

The School Context

L & C School is located in Missoula, a college town 40 miles from the Flathead reservation of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Members of the Pend d'Oreille and Salish tribes are concentrated on the southern part of the reservation. Their traditional homeland spanned nearby valleys and mountains, including the Missoula valley. Recently, the number of Native students enrolled in L & C School has risen to about 20 percent. Most of the parents of Native students attending L & C are university students living in nearby student housing. They are members of various tribes, most of which originated in today's Montana. The rest of the school, including 80 percent of student population and 100 percent of the teaching and administrative staff, are non-Native (all White except for a few Asian and African American students).

The L & C IEFA Program

To fulfill the goals of the schoolwide IEFA program, over 20 teachers (80 percent of the teaching staff) at L & C integrated perspectives of the Salish and Pend d'Oreille, the closest tribes and the tribes of the place, into all subject areas. For example, the story of the bitterroot is part of the first grade unit on Native plants and the cultural significance of the buffalo is a science topic for a non-fiction writing project in the second grade. In addition, the third grade's integrated curriculum revolves around the Salish seasons; pow-wow serves as one of the contexts for fourth grade social studies; and the fifth grade research project is partly based on conversations with Salish and Pend d'Oreille elders.

Under the program's place-based approach, students reached beyond the classroom to experience the place where Indigenous cultures and histories reside and connected face-to-face with members of neighboring American Indian communities who are so close yet often so distant. In a path-breaking instructional effort, L & C students learned from the expertise of American Indian educational partners from the Flathead reservation. Five elders and eight tribal members came to their K-5 classrooms to share stories based on their unique worldviews, to teach about what they learned from their ancestors who have been caretakers of the place for thousands of years, and to speak with teachers and students in heritage languages that encapsulate valuable knowledge that offers enlightening contrasts with Western perspectives. For example, one Salish elder shared with the grade 1 and 2 students Salish stories about the valley, the river, and the mountain. Another Salish elder shared with fifth graders the oral history of the period when her people used to set up camps and dig bitterroot at places where the university and Shopko are located today. In addition, L & C primary grade classes and a pre-K-6 Salish immersion school exchanged visits to "living sites" through which students developed mutual appreciation for one another's uniqueness, similarities, and current situation (see Caracciolo, 2008; Ngai & Allen, 2006). On these occasions, the children joined in classes at each other's school. They played together and sang together during their visits.

Study Methodology

To evaluate the program's impact on student learning and attitudes over the two-year grant period (see "summative evaluation" in Patton, 2002, p. 224), one of the authors, working in collaboration with lead teachers, developed and administered a survey instrument that invited L & C students to share their knowledge of local tribes, their understanding of American Indian history and culture in general, their attitudes toward American Indians and American Indian education, and their general interest in different cultures, languages, and people through various types of questions initially identified by the lead author and later made age-relevant in consultation with teachers (Patton, 2002, p. 350).³ All grade 1 and 2 students at L & C and one first and second grade class at a comparison school completed a survey of 15 questions. Two questions on this survey relate to the nearest tribes. Six questions address the "essential understandings" about American Indians identified by Montana tribal representatives. Montana's "Essential Understandings" framework includes "seven broad topics that range from the straightforward need to know the reservations' names, histories, and locations, to a statement about the nature of history as a story told from the perspective of the teller, to the difficult and complex issues of Indian spirituality and the historical and contemporary impact of government policies on American Indians" (Starnes, 2006, p. 188). Two questions are about attitudes toward American Indian people. Four questions involve attitudes toward diverse cultures and people. The last question is an open-ended one, asking respondents to describe in words or pictures their impression of American Indians.

All grade 3 through 5 students at L & C and a class from each grade at the comparison school completed a survey of 23 questions. In addition to the questions included in the survey used with the primary grades, the survey for the older students included three questions about all Montana tribes and reservations and five questions concerning the more advanced "essential understandings" about American Indians identified by Montana tribal representatives. The lead author also based the questions for grades 3 through 5 on learning outcomes aligned with the grade 3-5 curricula.

The findings reported here are based on four separate, but linked, data sets: baseline, end of first program year, end of second program year, and comparison school. At the outset of the program in the fall of 2005, 305 students enrolled in grades one through five at L & C completed the survey. At the end of the 2005-2006 school year, 252 L & C students completed essentially the same survey for a second time. The student population invited to complete the survey remained largely the same over the 2005-2006 academic year. However, teachers in two classes did not find time to complete the survey the second time.

At the end of 2006-2007 school year,⁴ 335 students completed the survey, most for a third time. At the end of the 2006-2007 school year, 98 students enrolled in classes representing grades 1 through 5 in a neighboring comparison school (CS) with similar student socioeconomic demographics also completed the survey. One class from each first through fourth grade and two classes from

fifth grade volunteered to complete the survey. The comparison school did not receive any grant funding for designing and testing new IEFA approaches and did not introduce schoolwide curriculum changes or strategically bring in tribal partners or mentors.

Student Learning Outcomes

Knowledge Building: Place-specific vs. Generic

The survey results (Table 1) indicate that L & C third through fifth grade students improved their geographical knowledge³ about tribal reservations across the state over the course of the program (also see Ngai & Koehn, 2010). When asked to identify the seven reservations in the state on a map of Montana before the start of the program, only 21 per cent of the L & C students could find the location of the nearest reservation (Flathead) and less than 10 per cent correctly located the others. By 2007, over half of the L & C study participants correctly identified three reservations (57 percent could find the closest one) and between 28 percent and 48 percent located the other four. The *smallest* schoolwide gain in ability to locate a reservation (Fort Belknap) was 27 percent. In contrast, no one at the CS correctly identified the Fort Belknap reservation on the map in 2007 and the correct percentages by the students at this school for the other six reservations were at least 30 percent lower in comparison with the L & C students.

The survey findings with regard to awareness of who their Indigenous Montana neighbors are and where they live are consistent in direction and scope. L & C students made impressive gains on all Montana-specific fronts in the first year of the program (from 2005 to 2006). L & C teachers generally sustained these gains through the second year of the program. Across the Montana-centered cognitive domain, students at the “program” school as a whole were far ahead of students in the same grades at the comparable neighboring “non-program” school at the end of the 2006-2007 school year.

Table 1. Percentage of students (3rd grade and above) who correctly labeled reservations on Montana map

Reservation	2005 L&C N=305	2006 L&C N=252	2007 L&C N=335	2007 Comparison school N=119
Flathead Reservation	21%	56%	57%	24%
Blackfeet Reservation	8%	33%	51%	14%
Rocky Boy’s Reservation	5%	21%	53%	15%
Fort Belknap Reservation	1%	8%	28%	0%
Fort Peck Reservation	3%	11%	33%	3%
Crow Reservation	3%	16%	48%	10%
Northern Cheyenne Reservation	3%	13%	38%	9%

In this respect, the IEFA program helped to elevate the status of Native communities and their contemporary homelands. Before the onset of IEFA, few non-Indian students knew about their Indian classmates' and neighbors' hometowns while American Indians enrolled in public schools have always been required to learn about the White person's territories. From these findings, the following questions arise for further consideration: What does increased knowledge among mainstream students about Indian reservations mean for American Indian people? Will such geographical knowledge make a difference at the interpersonal level?

Table 2 reports findings for questions that inquired about generic (not Montana-specific) knowledge. The Table 2 data show that while L & C students again made substantial and sustained gains in general knowledge about American Indian culture and history over the course of the program, their CS counterparts had attained a comparable level of generic knowledge by the end of the 2006-2007 school year. In general, both groups demonstrated high levels of knowledge on these fundamental aspects of American Indian history and culture. Two

Table 2. Percentage of students indicating general knowledge about American Indian culture and history

Item	2005 L&C N=305	2006 L&C N=252	2007 L&C N=335	2007 Comparison school N=119
Yes, each American Indian tribe has a culture of its own.	81%	90%	91%	90%
Yes, each tribe has its own history.	76%	91%	87%	90%
No, you can't always tell who is an American Indian.	57%	73%	77%	74%
Yes, American Indian tribes have their own government.*	32%	41%	57%	44%
Yes, before the Montana Constitution in 1889, the American Indian tribes held larger pieces of land than they do now.*	47%	79%	65%	64%
Yes, both the person and the tribe decide whether a person is a tribal member.*	16%	13%	30%	30%
Yes, American Indians still practice their traditions and language today.	76%	90%	89%	86%
Yes, only some American Indians live on a reservation.*	65%	74%	74%	87%

*Only third grade and above.

possible explanations for the generally comparable outcomes come to mind. First, the CS, located in the prestigious university district, could be exceptional in that many students arrive there with a knowledge base in Indian culture and history. Secondly, it is possible that teachers at the CS (and perhaps at other non-program elementary schools in the state) are focusing on Native American studies generally rather than emphasizing uniquely Montana conditions or the nearest tribes.

In any event, these findings are important at the analytic level because they demonstrate awareness of the contemporary situation of American Indians and the uniqueness of individual American Indian communities. For instance, three-fourths or more of the students understood that each tribe has its own history, that only some American Indians live on a reservation today, and that “you can’t always tell who is an American Indian.” Of particular interest, awareness regarding the continuing political issue of loss of tribal lands increased from less than half of the L & C students in 2005 to nearly four-fifths in 2006⁶ (also see Caracciolo, 2008, p. 226).

In terms of fulfilling the goal of transformative understanding, such learning outcomes reflect encouraging progress that is absent in most U.S. public schools. For instance, in other elementary schools, where students are “taught that Native peoples exist in the past only, they could not conceive of a contemporary indigenous person living as they live, yet still maintaining her Native identity” (Caracciolo, 2008, p. 226). Disregard for the special political status and the specific and unique languages, customs, religions, and current educational and economic concerns of North American tribes, coupled with the notion that Native peoples are a historical phenomenon with little if any contemporary relevance, “is at the heart of an insidious ‘anti-Indianism’ that is unacknowledged by academic and popular culture” (Caracciolo, 2008, p. 225). Further, “teaching about Native peoples in a way that reinforces the belief that their cultures are long gone forecloses educating for empathy and social justice” (Caracciolo, 2008, p. 228).

While the place-specific knowledge gains demonstrated by L & C students are impressive, attitudinal changes would be even more compelling. Did the emphasis on place-specific learning that distinguished the L & C program bring about changes in attitudes toward interacting with American Indian neighbors among these young learners?

Attitudes toward Interacting with American Indians

The commonly heard rhetoric among mainstream and American Indian education leaders in Montana tends to emphasize correcting misunderstandings held by non-Indians, removing stereotypes about American Indians in the mainstream society, and validating Native voices in public school curricula, but stops short of helping to heal and build relationships involving American Indian people and their non-Indian neighbors, colleagues, and classmates. Although not an explicitly articulated objective of Montana’s IEFA policy, local implementation that generates attitudinal

and behavioral change among the next generation of mainstream citizens offers the potential to uplift Native communities by advancing social justice. In the next sections, we explore the diverse ways that L & C teachers implemented IEFA by classroom grade level and link each approach to changes in student attitudes regarding relationships with American Indians.

Teacher Impacts

OPI Indian education specialists and IEFA advocates strongly encouraged Montana educators to adopt James Banks's (2003) transformative multicultural education model when implementing the state mandate. Banks's transformative vision meshes well with IEFA's goal to remove the tokenism that has been pervasive in Montana public school classrooms. Banks's model is helpful in pushing teachers to progress beyond celebrating Native American Week, carrying out turkey-and-feather projects during Thanksgiving, or putting up tipis as an inclusive gesture.

In order to achieve transformative outcomes that not only increase non-Indians' knowledge but directly benefit American Indian people and communities in the context of interracial relations, teacher educators need access to research findings that shed light on effective and ineffective educational approaches at all levels of schooling. In this section, we explore the impact of individual instructional strategies on student attitudes toward relating to American Indians.

The L & C education program allowed individual teachers to use their discretion in determining which pedagogical approaches to use in pursuing IEFA objectives. There were differences in teacher commitment and each teacher's instructional focus. Did these variations affect student learning outcomes? In the sections that follow, we select key L & C end-of-the-first-program-year results that allow for comparisons among teachers across grades 1 through 5.⁷

Two Multi-age Classes (1st/2nd and 2nd/3rd)

Our first teacher comparison considers attitudinal change among the youngest students to participate in the program. The contrasting teaching approaches used by 1st/2nd multi-age class teacher Ms. Davidson and 2nd/3rd multi-age class teacher Ms. Sharp both generated exceptionally positive overall results in comparison to schoolwide outcomes. The same Salish mentor visited both classes several times. Given that Ms. Davidson differs from Ms. Sharp in one important aspect of teaching, the two approaches provide an interesting basis for comparison at the primary level.

Ms. Davidson integrated the Salish perspective into a science writing project about buffalo in her 1st/2nd multi-age class. This class created a peace song (music and lyrics) that started with a Salish phrase, *Iyal, stem a sp?us*, meaning "Circle: What is in your heart?" Ms. Davidson guided students to integrate what they learned from their Salish mentor about the cultural meanings of drum and circle into the lyrics:

A circle is alive in the heartbeat of the drum
Life is given by the rhythm of the drum
A circle is alive when we gather 'round the drum
Its life is given by the drum

These two projects demonstrate effective integration of an Indigenous perspective into mainstream science and writing curricula. In the buffalo study, students learned about the Salish perspective on respecting and appreciating what nature offers to human survival. Through the peace song writing project, students learned about the Salish symbolism of circle and drum. However, neither of the learning projects addressed issues of interracial relationships or social justice.

Instead of engaging students in special projects, Ms. Sharp conducted entire-class conversations throughout the year about culture in general and students' own heritages in particular. In a post-program interview, Ms. Sharp shared that:

At the beginning of the year, students do not see themselves as persons of color. Since we started the Indian education project, we had some interesting discussions that we probably never would have had. [It happened] just because we had a culture we are talking about...The students are more open to speaking about their backgrounds and their heritage than I anticipated...Kids have become more interested in finding out about each other since I started to integrate Indian education.

This learning outcome described by Ms. Sharp illustrates how Indian education integration can penetrate beyond gaining "essential understandings." When IEFA is implemented as a form of transformative multicultural education, it is no longer limited to increasing knowledge about local tribes or correcting stereotypes. It is also about learning to recognize and celebrate one's own cultural identity through appreciation and respect for the identity of others in a diverse society.

By the end of the first program year, both classes demonstrated exceptionally positive attitudes toward American Indian people (see Table 3). The major difference in the two classrooms occurred in the percentage of students who liked to have American Indian friends at the end of the first program year. All of the students in Ms. Sharp's class and only 65 per cent in Ms. Davidson's class indicated that "now I like to have American Indian friends."

The learner outcome data from these two classrooms raise important questions for IEFA advocates and American Indian education leaders to consider. If IEFA stimulates intellectual interests among young learners in American Indian and Native American studies (see Ngai & Koehn, 2010) without nurturing the desire to build positive relationships with American Indian people, is this a step forward? If first grade through third grade students are interested in learning about American Indians, but have little desire to engage Indian people at a personal level, has the teaching approach moved beyond reinforcing the notion of "noble savage?" In other words, should IEFA stress including the marginalized in academic subject learning or should it focus on guiding intercultural growth

Table 3. Teacher comparison on attitudes toward American Indian people and education: Two multi-age (1st/2nd and 2nd/3rd) grade classes

Item	Ms. Davidson's 1st/2nd class (2006) N=19	Ms. Sharp's 2nd/3rd class (2006) N=16	School-wide average (2006) N=252
1. Now I like my teacher to teach about American Indians.	88%	100%	62%
2. Now I like to listen to American Indians.	94%	100%	76%
3. Now I like to learn from American Indians about caring for the environment.	100%	100%	74%
4. Now I like to have American Indian teachers.	88%	94%	54%
5. Now I like to have American Indian friends.	65%	100%	53%
6. Now I like to help American Indians.	82%	88%	60%

through learning about cultures in our midst, developing mutual understanding among classmates, neighbors, community members, and citizenships, and inviting/including American Indians into our lives as opposed to perceiving them as exotic monuments for intellectual interests?

Third Grade Classes

Among the participating third grade teachers, Ms. Peterson thoroughly integrated the Salish perspective into her curriculum. She is the most knowledgeable teacher about local tribal perspectives in the school. Ms. Samson is a teacher who has considerable empathy for Indian people. As a foster parent, she raised two Native American children. With her class, Ms. Samson conducted a service learning project that aimed at raising funds to support a Native language immersion elementary school located on the Flathead reservation.

Table 4 compares the end-of-first-year results on seven attitude items for the two third grade classes. The year-end attitudes of Ms. Samson's students toward Indian people are strikingly more positive on all seven items in comparison with Ms. Peterson's class. In particular, a substantially higher percentage of students in Ms. Sampson's class reported that, "Now I like to help American Indians" (95 percent versus 59 percent in Ms. Peterson's class).

The key contrast here involves an approach that supports intellectual understanding versus an approach that aims to foster social justice through helping

Table 4. Teacher comparison on attitudes toward American Indian people and education: Two third grade classes

	Ms. Peterson's 3rd grade class (2006) N=22	Ms. Samson's 3rd grade class (2006) N=20	School-wide average (2006) N=252
1. Now I like my teachers to teach about American Indians.	67%	90%	62%
2. Now I like to check out books about American Indians from the library.	32%	75%	37%
3. Now I like to listen to American Indians.	77%	95%	76%
4. Now I like to learn from American Indians about how to take care of the environment.	59%	85%	74%
5. Now I like to have American Indian teachers.	41%	75%	53%
6. Now I like to have American Indian friends.	64%	95%	53%
7. Now I like to help American Indians.	59%	95%	60%

our neighbors. Ms. Peterson focused on integrating the Salish perspective on seasons and environment throughout the science and social studies curricula to enhance academic learning and “essential understandings.” Ms. Samson guided students to organize a bake sale to raise funds for the Salish immersion school in the nearby tribal community after learning about the challenges of maintaining the Salish language. Through rigorous subject learning, Ms. Peterson’s students scored higher on most of the “knowledge” questions included in the post-project survey. Through engaging in a service learning project for social change, Ms. Samson’s students scored higher on attitudinal questions that indicate more positive attitudes toward Indian people.

If one teaching approach must be selected, a dilemma arises over whether to focus IEFA efforts on validating Indigenous cultures and their status in the scheme of world knowledges or on helping learners develop empathy with American Indian people in the name of social justice. The program evaluation results indicate that the former approach is less effective than the latter in instilling positive attitudes toward American Indian people and American Indian education. However, the emerging questions are: Would the latter reinforce perceptions of Native people as needy or victims of White invasion, or create appreciation for

their resilience? What kind of interracial relationships do Native people desire? Can a validation of Native values and a desire to help everyone around us, not just one specific group of people, be combined through social justice learning?

Fourth Grade Class⁸

Ms. Carson, a fourth grade teacher, believed in Indian education, but she did not agree with the place-based approach that called for a focus on the nearest tribes. To her, it was more important that fourth graders learn about all tribes than focus on in-depth study of the Salish and Pend d’Oreille tribes whose current home is about 40 miles from L & C school. She did not take time to develop a working relationship with the Salish partner who came to speak with her class.

No other L & C fourth grade data are available with which to compare Ms. Carson’s class outcomes. However, in comparison with the multi-age and third grade classes, the attitudes toward American Indians and Indian education (Table 5) expressed by Ms. Carson’s students remained less positive at the end of the first program year. The 2006 orientations reported by students in Ms. Carson’s class also are strikingly less positive than the schoolwide average.

This program evaluation outcome suggests that generic Native American studies is less effective than a place-based approach is in stimulating interest both cognitively and socially, although using textbooks that inform about American Indians settled somewhere in time and in space fulfills the IEFA goals of inclusion and filling knowledge gaps. The question that has emerged from the evaluation data reported here for IEFA advocates and classroom teachers to consider is:

Table 5. Teacher comparison on attitudes toward American Indian people and education: A fourth grade class

	Ms. Carson’s 4th grade class (2006) N=21	Schoolwide average (2006) N=252
1. Now I like my teacher to teach me about American Indians.	35%	62%
2. Now I like to check out books about American Indians from the library.	35%	37%
3. Now I like to listen to American Indians.	55%	76%
4. Now I like to have American Indian teachers.	30%	54%
5. Now I like to learn from American Indians about how to take care of the environment.	55%	74%
6. Now I like to have American Indian friends.	35%	54%
7. Now I like to help American Indians.	45%	60%

Should American Indian education be taught as an academic subject captured in texts, or should it be presented as a form of civic education that fulfills the U.S. democratic ideal by promoting citizens' obligations to learn about diverse local perspectives (including those of Native communities) and to work toward building constructive relations among neighbors of different ethnic, racial, cultural, immigration-status, and linguistic backgrounds (including American Indian people)? Lomawaima and McCarty's (2002) statement on American Indian education and the democratic ideal offers thought-provoking insight on this question in the context of refining IEFA objectives:

If the United States is going to realize its potential as a democracy, its citizens must face the Indian "problem." The problem is that despite persistent stereotypes, American Indian people insist on surviving on their own terms, as real human beings, not as celluloid manifestations of a mythic fantasy or as passive and powerless victims....We view diversity and democracy as inextricably linked. (p. 281)

Fifth Grade Classes

Here we compare Ms. Andrews's class with two other fifth grade classes. Ms. Andrews enthusiastically participated in the Indian education initiative as a place-based education program. She guided her students in conducting a mini research study about the Salish and Pend d' Oreille tribes. Their studies included reading materials about the history and culture of those tribes and one-on-one interviews with a Salish teacher from the closest public school on the Flathead reservation. Based on the information they gathered, students jointly wrote a "book" about Salish culture and people. Ms. Andrews's goal was to integrate place-based learning into academic learning (i.e., research and writing). The other two fifth grade teachers did not work on any special Indian education project, although they did attend talks delivered by the Salish elders and the tribal educators who spoke to Ms. Andrews's class. All three classes went on a field trip together to an environmental education event organized by the tribes on the Flathead reservation.

Table 6 shows that in comparison with other fifth graders, Ms. Andrews's class unexpectedly scored lower across the board at the end of the 2005-2006 school year on all of the attitudinal items, with the exception of interest in helping American Indians. Ms. Andrews's students were far less likely to be interested in learning about American Indians from their teachers (0 percent versus 43 percent), much less interested in listening to American Indians (8 percent versus 71 percent), and less inclined to have American Indian friends (8 percent versus 38 percent).

The IEFA project designed and implemented by Ms. Andrews fulfilled the IEFA goal of integrating the history and culture of a neighboring tribe into mainstream learning, which involved reading, writing, and research in this case. Post-project survey results indicate that her students gained increased awareness of the nearby tribes and general knowledge about tribal territories. At first glance, this is an exemplary approach in a standardized testing era because it served to increase students' "essential understandings" as called for by the IEFA Act,

Table 6. Teacher comparison on attitudes toward American people and education: Three fifth grade classes

	Ms. Andrew's class (2006) N=12	Other two 5th grade classes (2006) N=42	School- wide average (2006) N=252
1. Now I like my teachers to teach about American Indians.	0%	43%	61%
2. Now I like to check out books about American Indians.	8%	17%	37%
3. Now I like to listen to American Indians.	8%	71%	76%
4. Now I like to learn from American Indians about how to take care of the environment.	42%	62%	74%
5. Now I like to have American Indian teachers.	17%	31%	54%
6. Now I like to help American Indians.	42%	41%	60%
7. Now I like to have American Indian friends.	8%	38%	64%

without sacrificing time for building academic skills. The learner evaluation results indicate, however, that fixing teaching on the past jeopardized students' interest in learning more about and building relationships with American Indian people. A possible explanation is that Ms. Andrews's students found it hard to relate to people in stories about the past. To children, people whose lifestyle is drastically different from what they are used to might not seem real, interesting, or "cool."

Although the Montana mandate requires that all students learn about the cultures and histories of local tribes, the arising question is: Should teachers emphasize teaching histories and traditions over helping students relate to contemporary cultures and peoples in their midst? On this issue, Loewen (1995) maintains that, "by stressing the distant past, textbooks discourage students from seeking to learn history from their families or community, which again disconnects school from the other parts of students' lives" (p. 301). We are left to wonder if the outcome in this fifth grade class might have been different if Ms. Andrews had encouraged her students to interview tribal elders, to become immersed in today's Salish culture, in order to learn about the relevance of tribal history.

Conclusion

The IEFA initiative constitutes a breakthrough for American Indian people in Montana, whose voices finally are included in the state curricula used both on and off reservations. Tribal elders are being invited to mainstream classrooms as legitimate and respected knowledge bearers to share valued lessons with young learners (both Natives and non-Natives). For the first time, mainstream non-Indian teachers are deferring to tribal educators for advice regarding curriculum development. For the first time, Indian and non-Indian teachers are collaborating on developing teaching materials. From now on, teachers of American Indian youth cannot legally tell students to leave their cultures at the school doorstep. American Indians and non-Natives are to assume equal footing, fulfilling obligations of learning about each other's place in society. At long last, the engagement between American Indian tribes and Euro-American communities is based on mutual accommodation and benefit through educational partnerships rather than one-way assimilation.

Insights from the L & C Place-based IEFA Approach

The design of L & C's place-based educational approach is widely recognized as a model for Montana's historic IEFA initiative (see Ngai & Allen, 2007). A process guide derived from the pilot program is available via the Montana OPI Web site (http://www.opi.mt.gov/programs/indianed/IEFA.html#gpm1_6). The learning outcomes reported here raise several profound questions. What is the ultimate goal that educators and other advocates want to achieve through IEFA? What teaching approaches will ensure the most desired outcomes?

The findings presented in this article demonstrate impressive gains in L & C students' knowledge of the place and the development of positive attitudes toward interacting with American Indians that carry the potential to improve future interracial relationships among Indians and non-Indians. The improved attitudinal findings can be explained, in part, by the positive interpersonal experiences with Indian friends and educators introduced by the place-based Indigenous education project.

We also found that different instructional emphases are associated with positive and negative changes in outlook. On the positive front, we learned from the multi-age classroom comparison that Ms. Sharp's unique focus on intercultural reflection enhanced the attitudes of her second and third graders toward American Indians and American Indian education. In the third grade comparison, developing interpersonal connections and empathy for a local tribe through the service learning project that Ms. Samson's class conducted likely made a difference in terms of improving student attitudes and interest.

The research results reported here further suggest that certain instructional approaches might best be avoided. The fourth grade teacher's focus on increasing knowledge about American Indians tribes in general, instead of the nearby local tribes in particular, turned out to be ineffective in helping to improve students'

attitudes toward American Indian people. Failure to tap into the interpersonal benefits and enjoyment that a place-based focus offers is a likely contributor to the low level of interest in American Indian culture and people among Ms. Carson's students. Avoiding the risk of engaging in "messy" learning from people and people's voices, as opposed to learning from glossy textbooks, traps one in false assumptions of what knowledge is legitimate; the unfamiliar remains "the other" (see Smith, 1999). In addition, the fifth grade results suggest that a challenging in-class assignment that emphasizes gathering information about the past and the development of academic skills is not likely to improve, and can negatively affect, students' appreciation for members of the group they are focused on. If students perceive a research/writing assignment as too demanding or boring, they tend to develop negative feelings about the subject under investigation. Moreover, if learning is limited to a topic from the "distant" past (e.g., traditional tribal ways of life) that young children find hard to relate to, elementary school students can gain in knowledge but develop negative attitudes toward the focal group. Tapping into student interests at each grade level and each age group is an important consideration when attempting to instill positive attitudes toward Indian people through IEFA.

The knowledge and attitudinal research results reported here relate to a unique and innovative program for introducing IEFA in K-5 classrooms. Scholars interested in the relationship of instructional focus to attitudinal change generally and those involved in exploring specific manifestations of Indian educational initiatives should consider the relevance of these findings. In addition, we encourage other researchers to investigate whether the instructional approaches to Indigenous education highlighted here are consistently related to the kinds of positive and negative attitudinal changes reported in this study.

Issues Requiring Further Attention

Agreement between Indian and non-Indian advocates and policymakers in response to the following questions would help unify interpretation of the law: What are the most desired outcomes of IEFA? Should IEFA focus on encouraging intellectual interest in American Indian studies, increasing geographical knowledge about tribal territories, ending the marginalization of Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum, improving interracial relations, benefiting Native individuals and communities, and/or enhancing awareness of diversity and one's place in a multicultural society? Can IEFA be framed as "democratic pedagogies" that guide teachers, students, schools, and communities to engage in work contributing to social justice, equality, and empowerment of all people (see Grande, 2004, p. 28) — including members of Indigenous communities?

The program evaluation results reported in this article indicate that each classroom approach, depending on the teacher's focus, tends to achieve only one or some of these outcomes. When creating lesson plans, teaching materials and curricula, therefore, the crucial question is: What should the principal learning

focus be? In order to reach agreement on a response to this question, further reflection on a number of issues is required. Specifically, the study findings reveal urgent and challenging questions that call for clarification by Native communities and IEFA advocates:

- (1) Should IEFA focus on educating non-Indians about local American Indian cultures and histories or on improving current interracial relations?
- (2) Should IEFA stress the history of oppression and marginalization in academic subject learning or should it focus on guiding intercultural growth through learning about living cultures and resilient peoples as a vital part of an inclusive society (see also Grande, 2004)?
- (3) Should IEFA focus on validating Indigenous cultures and their status in the scheme of world knowledges and/or on helping learners develop empathy toward American Indian people in the name of social justice?
- (4) Should IEFA primarily be presented as an academic subject captured in texts or as an ethical obligation to learn about and experience the place in which we live and the perspectives of our neighbors?
- (5) Should an emphasis on teaching about local Indigenous histories and traditions take precedence over helping students relate to contemporary American Indian communities and their ever-evolving cultures?

Although the goals of an Indian education program can be manifold, these either-or questions push one to think deeply in order to prioritize and focus. In short, the learning objectives of Montana's Indian Education for All initiative require elaboration and fine-tuning. Further contributions from American Indian education leaders, tribal cultural leaders, and IEFA advocates are needed in this regard.

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Notes

¹The authors gratefully acknowledge the helpful comments and suggestions received from anonymous reviewers on an earlier version of this manuscript.

²The authors received permission to use the school's actual name.

³A copy of the survey instrument is available on request from the lead author. For details regarding the survey methodology, see Ngai & Koehn (2010).

⁴In the 2006-07 academic year, the number of students enrolled at L & C increased. Among the survey respondents, most grade 2-5 students had completed the survey the year before.

Grade 1 students completed the survey for the first time. Although the program director did not identify and track specific students in the interest of respecting respondent anonymity, it is possible to engage in schoolwide longitudinal analysis. Only a small amount of student turnover (in and out) occurred during the program period.

⁵The survey for grades 1 and 2 did not include geographical questions about the reservations.

⁶The percentage decreased by about 10 percent in the following year — possibly because some teachers overlooked the topic that year.

⁷We have changed all teacher names. The 2005 baseline survey did not include attitudinal questions.

⁸Only one of the three L & C fourth grade classes that participated in the 2006 survey can be isolated for end-of-school-year analysis.

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