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A Case Study: Native American Traditions in Child Welfare Assessments

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by

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Abstract

Little research has been conducted regarding how culture is used in assessing parenting capabilities in Indian Child Welfare (ICW). A case study was conducted within the Native American community of the Woodland People to explore this phenomenon. The data used in this qualitative research project consisted of interviews of the Indian Child Welfare workers and a content analysis of the active cases of the workers. Loss within the Woodland People, inconsistencies in practice, and the understanding of Indian Child Welfare were the three main themes that emerged from the data. The data within these themes clearly demonstrated that the Indian Child Welfare workers in the Woodland People's community understood the culture and community in which they worked. Incorporating culture into his or her assessment of parental capabilities was as varied as each worker. The data pointed to opportunities to explore further research, practice changes, and educational systems change. The story presented by the ICW workers in this case study provided this author a greater understanding into the Woodland People's community.

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Social Work is a profession that implements evidence-based practice (Webb, 2002), as well as cultural competence and culturally responsive practice (National Association of Social Workers, 2013a). Yet, inadequate research of evidence-based practices exists (Aarons & Palinkas, 2007).   Of further concern, there is very little research with specific Native American communities regarding culturally responsive practice as it relates to child welfare. In 2011, child abuse and neglect rates in the Native American population were the third highest amongst all races (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Additionally, there is growing concern about Native American parents' ability to raise their children in a healthy culture (Subia BigFoot & Funderburk, 2011). There are 11.4 Native American children reported as abused or neglected per 1000 (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Hodge and Limb (2008) noted that Native Americans have the highest level of service needs thus increasing the likelihood of social workers working with Native Americans. This data stresses the importance of social workers' knowledge about Native American culture in order to deliver child protection services that are conducted in a culturally competent manner. Such attention to culture may positively impact the disparity regarding Native American service needs.

Child protection social workers are expected to assess protective parenting capacities to determine if the parents are able to provide safety for their children (Choate, 2009). Understanding parenting from a Native American perspective may be a critical step in assessing parental capacities that lead to an effective case plan. However, there is no clear model that guides child welfare professionals in doing so within the context of

Native American history, values, or norms. The historical forfeiture of many Native American cultural practices has led to a concern that many traditional parenting practices may be disappearing (Evans-Campbell, Fredriksen-Goldsen, Walters, & Stately, 2007). This phenomenon of a "disappearing culture" may further diminish the opportunity to complete culturally competent parenting assessments and create effective plans that consider the cultural aspects of Native American families. Therefore, particular attention to research may play a vital role in assisting social workers in gaining an understanding of Native American parenting practices and improving service delivery.

Given the limited research specific to the historical and cultural aspects of service delivery with Native Americans, the purpose of this study is to gain deeper understanding of how culture is considered in child welfare practice within a particular Native American community. While there is no previous research specific to the community to be studied in this case, past research on cultural practices provides guidance in understanding the importance of cultural competence in serving Native American families, and for establishing a conceptual framework for this study. Webb (2002) noted the relevance of practice-based evidence or reviewing the knowledge of specific community wisdom and practice to provide feedback for the improvement of practice. Improved understanding of Native American history, cultural activities important to parenting, wellness from a Native American perspective, and information regarding the Woodland People's community, will contribute to the body of knowledge available to social work professionals serving the Native American population.

<center>Literature Review</center>

The literature reviewed indicated that there is little research conducted into the investigation of cultural parenting practices and its impact on child welfare systems for Native Americans. Evans-Campbell et al. (2007) also noted that little is known about racial and ethnic caregiving within the Native American population. With limited knowledge for practice providers, research has indicated that it is imperative that systems who work with the Native American population must have awareness of Native American culture and awareness of how their own values, biases, and beliefs may impact their work with the Native American community (Weaver, 1999). Without a great deal of knowledge about direct practice outcomes, the literature reviewed concentrated on educating social workers on a historical perspective that impacts direct practice, Native American cultural practices, and an understanding of how "wellness" is defined by the culture. These key elements of the literature were important in guiding this study and discovering how child welfare practice considered cultural context in their work with Native American families.

Historical Perspective

Every family and community has a unique history that impacts the formation of support and life understanding. Native Americans' connection to their historical traditions is imperative to building healthy future generations (Evans-Campbell et al., 2007). Understanding the importance of the history that each tribal community has experienced will be important for social workers as it may provide insight why a family may not be seen as being healthy. Understanding a community's history will assist in developing perspective when families in a tribal community may be viewed as not working hard to change or non compliant with system expectations.

A context in which to view the historical perspective came from the concept of Seven Generations (Mooradian, Cross, & Stutzky 2006).   Native Americans value the importance of identification with their community (Schweigman, Soto, Wright, & Unger, 2011). The concept of Seven Generations is important as a tribal community can look three generations back in order to see where they are going three generations ahead (Mooradian, Cross, & Stutzky 2006). The ability for Native American communities to have significant ties to their past is important as multigenerational families habituate values within their system (Goins, Spencer, McGuire, Goldberg, Wen, & Henderson, 2010). Any disruptions in the connection between generations will lead to stress with the individuals in the community and the community itself.

 Mooradian et al. (2006) noted several well-documented points in history where the Seven Generations perspective was devastated with Native Americans. During the so-called "Treaty Period", Native Americans experienced a series of broken promises from the United States government, which was the start of the removal of traditions (Mooradian et al. 2006). Due to this break in trust with larger systems, Hodge and Limb (2010) pointed out the importance of current systems that work with tribal communities of being transparent and open in their work. The "Treaty Period" was just the beginning of the historical attempted destruction of Native American culture.

The "Removal Period" of the 1800's led to the forcible removal of Native Americans from the land that they had created a traditional balance (Mooradian et al. 2006). Being placed in alternative lands created another disconnect from the 7 generations concept as the old ways and stories that were tied to the land were now lost to the youngest generation of the time. Herring (1998) suggested that the land that tribal members live on

is not just a possession but part of a greater system that helps maintain a member's identification with their community. Once the ties to traditional lands were severed the next step the United States government took was to take steps to make Native Americans less than the white culture.

The "Termination Period" of history for Native Americans led to further dissolution of the Seven Generations (Mooradian et al. 2006). The government attempted to end all legal status and rights for Native Americans. As a result, Native Americans were placed in a position to be dependent upon a system instead of being interdependent with all systems, which is important to traditional methods of maintaining inner balance (Portman & Garret 2006). There was one more methodical attempt in which the United States conducted to erase Native American culture.

One final period of note that had some of the most negative impacts on Native Americans was the "Civilizing Period" in which the banning of traditions was implemented (Mooradian et al 2006). The "civilizing" of Native Americans included forcible removal from their communities and placements in boarding schools. By the implementation of removing children from their community, mentors in modeling traditional practices were not available for others to learn important lessons of life balance that facilitated community connections (Subia BigFoot & Funderburk, 2011). The Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the late 1800's noted that if Native Americans grew up in traditional homes they would become unprincipled according to Morrison (1998). The propaganda used by Indian Affairs facilitated the removal and "education" of many Native Americans. This final practice from the government all but destroyed the concept of "Seven Generations".

Historically systems that have been involved with the Native Americans have used methods that created disharmony in Native American communities (Hodge, Limb, & Cross 2009).   Garrett and Garrett (1994) found that Native Americans develop a sense of self, based upon their connections to their community. The literature specifically noted why many Native Americans today may not have a secure connection to their past. Without firm ties to the past, seeing a positive future becomes very difficult. Morris and Wood (2010) noted that children become a generation of parents who have an inability to implement their culture to positively impact parenting practices. Assessing how systems impact a family's connection to their past may be helpful in determining possible protective capacities. Social workers may develop a context to improve current practice based upon their knowledge of Native American history.   Another source of information that is important for cultural awareness are the cultural practices in the community which child welfare practice is being conducted.

Common Cultural Practices

Morris and Wood (2010) commented that the use of traditional cultural practices reduces problems in Native American communities. In working with Native American communities the second important area for social workers to understand are cultural practices. This section will review common cultural practices that the literature focused on being important to effectively work with Native American communities.

In order to review what are important cultural practices, a working definition of culture was useful in knowing the scope of the word. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) guides social work practice and values regarding the importance of culture. The NASW Standards of Social Work Case Management was reviewed in an

effort to discover a definition of culture. The standards set by NASW (2013b) identified

culture to include a wide variety of features, which included: (a) race, (b) socioeconomic

status, (c) nationality, (d) religious background, and (d) other features that either a family

or individual may be identified. In brief, culture directs views and boundaries for

responses (Mooradian et al., 2006). This study used this broad definition established by

NASW for the working definition of culture. This section reviews what the literature

indicated as important cultural concepts in Native American communities. Concepts

noted were: (a) the importance of family, (b) the elders in the community, (c) the number

four, (d) circles, and (e) ceremonies.

    The family make up and definition of how family is defined is very important to

Native American culture. Families are considered to be multigenerational in their make

up (Goins et al. 2010). Native American family members focus on the need of the whole

not on specific people. As a result of the multi generational view of family, Native

Americans are in a caregiver role for longer periods of time versus other cultures (Evans-

Campbell et al., 2007). Traditional views of Native American families will encompass

an abundant group of relatives and non-relatives who all share in the responsibility of

caregiving (Mooradian et al., 2006). In a broad sense, family is the tribal community as

a whole. Children are seen as a gift from the Creator (Subia BigFoot & Funderburk,

2011). Because children are a gift, the community is responsible to take care of the gift

granted (Evans-Campbell et al., 2007). Another common feature of family life is that

grand parents rear the children while the parents provide support (Dalla, Jacobs-Hagen,

Jareske, & Sukup, 2009). The embodiment of the Native American family has meaning

beyond the basic model that main society has prescribed (Brokenleg, 2010).

The importance for service providers who are working with Native American families to spend time to understand each family's unique make up is critical. There are many "aunties" who are not relatives as defined by mainstream society. The design of what is family is not limited to a biological connection (Momper & Jackson, 2007). Native Americans view the universe as family (Garret & Garrett, 1994). Separations from their known universe will create disharmony for individuals as Native Americans view life as an interdependent system (Portman & Garrett, 2006). Without the understanding of family, social workers will miss who are the natural supports in times of need. Social workers who view family through traditional or mainstream societal definitions, will impact their ability to work effectively. Family is not the only resource within the community Native American possess, there are other tribal members who are placed in high regard for their understanding of their community (Herring, 1998).

Within the context of Native American families there lies a special group of people who are known as the elders of the community.   Elders hold an esteemed position within a tribal community. Elders are to be respected based upon the wisdom and knowledge they possess (Herring, 1998). Elders will most likely provide their wisdom through the use of story telling (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). The words of elders are held in such high regard that it is considered to be very rude to interrupt an elder while they are speaking (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). Elders provide their communities a role model in how to conduct their lives. They are the keepers of culture and community (Mooradian et al., 2006).

Elders in their community are the place traditional practicing Native Americans go for guidance. The elder may provide that leadership by their community service, spirituality, or example by their experiences (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). Without the connection to elders, many communities would loose their traditional practices and source of spirituality (Portman & Garrett, 2006). The importance of spirituality and how it relates to the other aspects of life will be discussed next as part of how Native Americans may view life.

Life of Native Americans is often viewed through the lens of the four directions. This theme is vital to maintain balance. If one direction a person is traveling is out of balance, then the rest of the directions will also have a sense of imbalance (Momper & Jackson, 2007). The four-direction theme can be seen in many Native American views of life (Hodge & Limb, 2010). The most common view of the four directions is that North is about mind, West is about body, South is about nature and East is about life (Garrett & Garrett, 1994). There is interconnectedness between all of these aspects of life. There are other viewpoints of the four directions in life; they are all equally related in the fact that all points have a connection that impacts the other.

The four constructs of healing is another cultural perspective that involves the number four. The four constructs are: spirituality, community, environment, and self (Portman & Garrett, 2006). The cultural practice again involves the connection between all areas. Herring (1998) echoes a similar viewpoint by noting that harmony is created both through self and the environment. The four directions/constructs represent four main points of life. When these four points are connected with lines then another common view of Native American life is created, the circle.

The circle is another cultural view of Native American life. As with the four directions, circles also have multiple ways of being viewed. The circle is actually a representation of the four directions (Portman & Garrett, 2006). The way of the circle is the unwritten code by which to live. The code is passed on through stories, ceremonies, customs, and teachings (Portman & Garrett, 2006). Subia BigFoot & Funderburk (2011) stated that the circle theory of life is fundamental to Native Americans maintaining balance through tradition. Herring (1998) noted that life should be harmonious if life is lived in step with nature and traditions. In order to maintain balance the circle theory looks at how each circle encompasses the other circle.

Hodge, Limb, & Cross (2009) also stressed the importance of the use of circles in their research. Hodge, Limb & Cross (2009) noted that each system in life is a circle that is encompassed by another system. In their research, the spirit is central, which is surrounded by the body, which is responding to the mind that reacts to its environment. When life is going well then there is balance between the circles. This is only one view of how circles are viewed in Native American culture.

Portman and Garrett (2006) also noted in their research the circle was used by Native Americans to note how each part of their life encompasses another. This view had the center of the circle representing self, surrounded by family, surrounded by natural environment, and everything is surrounded by the spirit world. This view of the circle reflects the importance of using tradition in everyday life and when that circle is neglected then the circle is considered to be broken (Portman & Garrett, 2006).

Brokenleg (2010) discussed another view of the circle. This circle is called the "circle of courage" (Brokenleg, 2010) that has four points around the circle. The four

points of courage include: generosity, independence, belonging, and mastery. This particular circle has specific meaning regarding how the Native American culture parents without the use of abusive discipline (Brokenleg, 2010). The importance of circles in Native American community is clearly documented within the literature. How the circles are viewed and implemented are for different purposes.

One last cultural component that will be discussed is the importance of ceremonies. There is very little research on the use of ceremonies in the use of child welfare. Ceremonies are frequently very private and not accessible to those outside of the tribal culture (Rybak & Decker-Fitts, 2009). Some ceremonies are common amongst many tribal cultures [pow-wows and story telling] and some are created specifically for specific issues (Rybak & Decker-Fitts, 2009). Ceremonies are a vital part of building a connection between an individual's past, present and future as it relates to being part of a tribal community (Evans- Campbell et al, 2007).

These cultural practices are just a few in Native American communities. It is not the intention of this study to note every cultural practice but to inform key factors that may impact the lives of Native Americans. The intent is to bring forth key cultural practices that build a foundation to lead into a discussion around the notion of wellness in Native American cultures. Another building block for social workers to develop in conducting effective assessments for families in Native American communities will bet the concept of wellness.

Wellness

Social workers have an ethical responsibility to promote the general wellbeing of society as a whole (NASW, 2013a). The concept of wellness with Native American

populations is an important concept to facilitate the wellbeing of each individual and community. Rybak and Decker-Fitts (2009) noted that in Native American cultures; wellness is based upon an individual's balance between the physical, emotional, mental (mind) and spirit. The role of the social worker is to support the community at the micro, mezzo and macro level to maintain the sense of wellness. This section of the literature will focus on wellness to build an understanding for better practice as it relates to child welfare.

There is a belief in Native American culture that wellness or unwellness is the responsibility of each individual (Portman & Garrett, 2006). In order to reach wellness individuals must practice balance in their ecological systems (Momper & Jackson, 2007). The viewpoint of wellness is unique to the individual and is an important concept to understand for social workers.   The path each person chooses is rooted in traditional practice and connected to the four directions (Garrett & Garrett 1994).

Constructive paths connected to each direction are important to understand how each person or community is on the right path.   Destructive forces observed within the individual and communities are viewed as going away from the path (Portman & Garrett, 2006). The other sections of this research noted cultural practices become the key in keeping the connective paths constructive. The use of ceremonies keep an individual connected to the good path. Broken paths to the traditional way create a broken circle or unwellness or dis-ease (Portman & Garrett, 2006). Even though the way to wellness is up to each individual, extended family plays a key role in developing the practices, beliefs regarding wellness and the connection between all directions (Subia BigFoot & Funderburk, 2011).   There are certain rituals that play a part in keeping the connection of

the circle. Without the understanding and respect of the elders and extended family practices to maintain wellness may be lost to individuals.

Hodge, Limb & Cross (2009) gathered information to note the practices that are important to keep of the four directions in balance. The spirit remains in balance through ceremony, rituals, dreams and prayer. The body is kept in balance through nutrition, sleep, exercise and recreation. Storytelling, reminiscing, remembering, and memorials balance the mind. Family, elders, culture, and traditions maintain nature or environment. Even though each direction is reliant upon each other, the spirit is the key factor that is most important to wellness (Hodge & Limb, 2010).

Native Americans' idea of wellness is not usually viewed in child welfare practice or seen as an option to assist individuals and families with problems (Hodge, Limb & Cross, 2009). Frequent connection with tradition is available to most tribal members. However, even though participation is high, there is a doubt in the importance of its practice (Dalla et al., 2009). The level of acculturation also factors how tradition is accepted or incorporated into daily life (Morris & Wood, 2010). As each person becomes more assimilated and traditions are lost, then so are the connections needed to keep each direction in balance that leads to wellness (Herring, 1998).

The literature indicated key concepts of culture for social workers to understand when working with tribal communities in conducting child welfare practice. The literature also stated that key concepts of understanding are rarely just community specific. Individual cultural practices are just as important as community knowledge. Allen (2002) noted that having an understanding of individual tribal cultures is crucial working with Native American communities. This research will attempt use the broad understandings

developed through the literature in order to develop greater knowledge of specific child welfare practices from the Woodland People located in the Midwestern United States. The next section of this research will develop the conceptual framework for the research was conducted.

Conceptual Framework

This research sought to find knowledge that has been unavailable. Creswell (2007) described qualitative research as an opportunity to develop a theoretical lens for inquiry that leads to understanding the meaning that individuals and groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Stake (1995) noted, as knowledge is gathered, particular information is sought to bring to light strengths and challenges of the topic. How the research is conducted and the viewpoint from which it is developed depends greatly upon the lens used in the research (Creswell, 2007). The research was conducted through specific theoretical and professional lenses.

Theoretical Lens

This research was conducted through a social work perspective. Systems theory was the specific social work theory that was implemented. In his description of systems theory, Barker (2003) emphasized the interconnection between the person, institutions, societies, and surroundings. Schweigman et al. (2011) described once instance in the literature the interconnection between cultural knowledge of community individuals and the alleviation of social and health problems in Native American communities. Given the shared meaning related to the interconnectedness between people and their environment, systems theory provided an appropriate conceptual framework for studying social work practice with Native American families and communities.

There were several authors whose viewpoints regarding systems theory supported the Native American perspective of interdependence and interconnectedness. Each viewpoint stressed the importance of the connection between the parts of the whole. Turner (1996) viewed the basis of systems theory is to provide an understanding of how systems effect and interplay with the individual or group. Hodge, Limb & Cross (2009) also supported the view that changes in one area of life results in changes throughout the larger system. Leighninger, Jr. (1997) conceptualized systems theory as the relationship between micro and macro events between each particular system as it related to the whole environment. In systems theory an ongoing relationship is developed with each specific system whether large or small. The relationship that is established changes as each system within the whole changes. The literature reviewed indicated that Native American culture is strongly rooted in systems theory.

The main concepts of the literature (history, cultural practices, and wellness) discussed the impact one system had on the rest of the systems in a tribal community or individual. Historically, as each period of history was described, the actions of one system, the United States, impacted another system, the Native American culture. The cultural practices described all specifically discussed how each system was interrelated. The concept of wellness noted the interconnection between the physical, emotional, mind, and spirit. Whether on a personal level or community level, each of the concepts of the literature discussed the relationship of one part of the system and how it impacted another.

Professional Lens

According to the NASW (2013a) one of the ethical principals of the profession is that social workers will challenge social injustice. Social workers have the charge to bring forth issues that may discriminate either individuals or groups of people. One method that NASW suggested to combat social justice concerns was to provide knowledge about cultural and ethnic diversity. NASW (2013a) also noted social workers should practice within their areas of competence and develop their professional expertise. In developing expertise social workers have an ethical responsibility to understand culture and how it impacts behavior (NASW, 2013a). The literature indicated very little research is available to gain an understanding of how culture is used or considered in assessing Native American families in the child welfare system. Weaver (1999) noted that historically social work is a Eurocentric profession; therefore, special attention should be paid to how assessments are conducted in child welfare practice to ensure ethical principles and standards are maintained.   Allen (2002) concluded that assessments with Native Americans tend to be culturally inappropriate, poorly conducted and purposes are not explained. The purpose of the research was to explore and understand how culture is assessed in a specific Native American community.

In order to gain an understanding of current practice, Indian Child Welfare (ICW) workers of the Woodland People were recruited to participate in a single case study. Using current practitioners facilitated an understanding of how Native American culture was used in assessments for child welfare. It was through the study of the staffs' application of cultural knowledge that information was gained to determine what connection existed between protective parenting practices and use of traditional parenting.

Methodology

As noted in the literature, the existence of research that explored an in depth understanding of the experiences of child welfare workers working with Native Americans was limited. Creswell (2007) claimed that qualitative research is an opportunity to develop an understanding of the experiences from the perspective of the individuals or group being studied through a particular theoretical lens.

Research Design

In determining the research design, the research question pointed to potential methodologies that would assist in finding a solution. This particular study used a research question that was seeking knowledge from a unique perspective of a particular cultural group. Stake (1995) described a case study's purpose is to develop greater knowledge with a specific topic within a case. Yin (2009) explained a case study methodology is appropriate to use when the research question tries to contribute to developing an understanding of a particular group, organization, or individual. This research dealt with an understanding of one organization, the Social Service Department of the Woodland People. Since the research sought knowledge from a specific organization, a case study was determined to be the most appropriate method for this study

Determining the type of case study that was best suited for this research was a critical component of the methodology. Single or a multiple case study designs were the choices in creating the design for this study. In a multiple case design there is a comparison between cases, while in a single case design only a unique situation is studied (Stake, 2006). In this particular study one unique organization was studied. Linn (2009) noted

that there are three purposes of conducting a case study: explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory. Since the research question was to seek knowledge, the case study purpose was exploratory in nature. There was another research method could have answered an "exploratory" type of question regarding current practice; however, due to time limitations for this study an experiment was not feasible.

Linn (2009) recommended that a case study design at a minimum should use a protocol consisting the following four main areas: an overview of the project, field procedures, case study questions, and a guide for the case study report. The research protocol that was used in this study is discussed in the next section.

Research Protocol

As the literature review noted earlier, there exists little research regarding the use of Native American traditions in child welfare practice. Specific research regarding the Woodland Peoples' ICW workers and how they use traditions specific to the Woodland Peoples' child welfare practices did not exist prior to this study. The purpose of this case study was to explore how ICW workers incorporate specific community traditions into their child welfare assessments. The setting was a Native American community located in the Midwest of the United States. Specifically, the Social Services Department was the location of the research. The rationale for selecting this particular Native American community was due to the willingness of this particular Social Services Department to participate in research. The selected population was current Indian Child Welfare workers for the Woodland People. This population was selected due to they were in the best position to describe current practices in their community.

Since social work is based upon practice from the Caucasian perspective (Weaver, 1999), assessments in child welfare that are culturally sensitive are vital for developing trust (Allen, 2002). Gaining an understanding of conducted local practices can be reviewed by the Woodland People to review if assessments are culturally sensitive. This study also may bring forth local practices that may be further studied to determine the possible implementation in other settings.

Field procedures.

In research there are many types of samples in which a researcher may choose in the design of the methodology. Padgett (2008) noted samples should relate to the research question. In order to find a sample that related directly to the research question, purposive sampling was used in this particular research. Purposive sampling is predicated on that those chosen in the sample have the knowledge related to the topic (Padgett, 2008).   The criterion for sampling as described by Padgett was met by requesting each Indian Child Welfare (ICW) worker from the Woodland People participate as part of the sample. The ICW workers from the Woodland People possessed the knowledge needed for this research based upon their current practice in the community. The sample size was small, due to the number of ICW workers in the department. The size of the sample was important as the smaller the sample size; the information tends to be more rich and informative (Padgett, 2008). Regardless of the sample size, field procedures that included protection of all respondents of their rights were established.

In a case study the first step in the field procedure was gaining access to the organization and participants. The access was gained by receiving a letter (see Appendix

C) from the Social Service Director from the Woodland People to allow access to the

ICW workers. A review of the current employee list with the Social Services Director

from the Woodland People identified the ICW workers. The Social Services Director

informed the ICW workers of the research project and an initial list of those workers who

were willing to proceed in the research was provided to the researcher. Every person

identified from this list was sent an email (see Appendix D) explaining the research

project and why he or she was chosen to participate in this research project. Each email

had the informed consent form (see Appendix A) attached for their review along with an

explanation that their participation was voluntary. The University of St. Thomas

developed the draft of consent form used for this particular study. Dr. Felicia Sy reviewed

the final version of the consent form prior to it submittal for use. In order to ensure

participant rights, each ICW worker was given the participant's rights form in writing by

the Social Service Director and was told that each person will be contacted by this

researcher within one week of the email to determine initial volunteers and create a time

in order to conduct an interview. Each participant had the choice of when and where to

have the interview conducted to protect confidentiality. The interviews were conducted

following the University of St. Thomas' Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

Protection of human subjects.

Yin (2009) described that the protection of respondent rights is vital for any case study

protocol.   Prior to conducting the formal interview for the study, a consent form (see

Appendix A) was reviewed with each respondent again that ensured the voluntary nature

of his or her participation. The respondents were informed that the interview would be

approximately 45 minutes to an hour in length. In order to be respectful of possible tribal

customs in which the recording of conversations are not permitted; the respondents were also informed that they had a choice how their interview was documented. The choice offered was either to audio record the conversation or use written notes by this researcher. The respondents were asked if they had any questions prior to consenting to the interview. The interviews did not proceed without the verbal consent and signature of each respondent. Each respondent was interviewed separately and no identifying information was attached to any note made or any audio recording. At the completion of each interview all consent forms, any notes and/or audio recordings gathered were kept in a locked box in which only the researcher had the key/combination. Backup for consent forms and notes taken were scanned and saved on this researcher's password protected personal computer. All audiotapes and any backup copies from interviews were stored in a locked box until they are destroyed. The University of St. Thomas' IRB approved all protective issues of human rights prior to being implemented.

A request to the Social Services Director from the Woodland People was made in order to access current ICW files of the ICW workers who volunteered to participate in this research project. This researcher made a written request that each file viewed would be limited to only the assessment or parts of the file that may possess information regarding the practice of traditions within the family. A content analysis was conducted as a method to analyze the files. It was requested that each assessment used had the names stricken or redacted prior to viewing. No copies of the information were made of any file information and only handwritten notes were taken regarding each assessment viewed. Written notes taken regarding ICW files did not contain any identifying information of the worker involved in the case or family individuals. In order to ensure

cultural sensitivity this researcher consulted with the Social Service Director to ensure the handling of information was used appropriately according to any tribal customs. The notes that were taken by this researcher were stored in a locked box that only this researcher had either the key or combination. Each note was scanned and saved on this researcher's password protected personal computer as a backup. The request to view files was for February 27 and 28, 2014. All data was destroyed at the completion of this study a date no later than May 19, 2014.

Data collection.

A series of sixteen questions were used to conduct the interview (see Appendix B). This researcher's committee and the University of St. Thomas' Institutional Review Board reviewed the questions prior to their use. The structure of the interview was semi-structured which allowed for clarifying questions to be used during the course of the interview. Open-ended questions were used to allow for a free flow of information without interruption from the interviewer. The participants were asked clarifying questions during the course of the interview in order to create a better understanding of questions. Consistency of clarifying questions was maintained by documenting them during the interviews and which question they were associated. If a clarifying question was needed, the use of prior documented clarifying questions were used first prior to introducing a new question.

A review of the notes or audio recordings was done to search for patterns of important themes/issues. This research did not limit important findings only to frequency of meanings as a single instance in an interview may carry significant meaning by itself

(Stake, 1995). The use of themes in the findings was used with caution as not to refine the data so much as to lose critical components of the data (Padgett, 2008).

Notes were gathered from the case files regarding the use of any traditional practices used in parenting or used as protective factors for the children. The notes taken only recorded the existence of specific practices. The notes taken did not have any identifying information regarding the family as whole or specific members. The notes were reviewed to document important findings that may validate the interviews or suggest other areas to be researched. The findings found in the data collection were used in the data analysis.

Case study questions.

Linn (2009) described five levels of questions that should be considered in the creation of the interview. The levels described were: questions for specific interviewees, questions regarding the individual case, questions regarding patterns of findings, questions related to literature or published data, and questions about policy recommendations. The flow of the questions for the interviewees followed the pattern of the specific types of questions noted by Linn.

The first six questions were asked for the specific interviewees. These questions focused on the individual experiences of the case to be studied. The next six questions pertained to the Woodland People's community as a whole and the practice of Indian Child Welfare. These questions were specific to the case as a whole. Question thirteen looked for any patterns of practice. Question fourteen reviewed how practice related to the literature. Question fifteen related to the methods used to assess information. The last question provided an opportunity to review practice and recommend any practice

changes. One final question was added to provide an opportunity for the interviewees to provide any other relevant material. (See Appendix B)

Data analysis.

The data gathered was used in the theoretical lens of systems theory. Using the research noted in the literature review the findings gathered through the use of interviews and file reviews were compared to the important aspects of Native American culture as noted in the literature. This comparison provided insight on how the Woodland People's child welfare system considered traditional tribal custom in their practice. Each interview coded looked for common themes that related to the literature review along with any new themes to be considered for further research. This researcher reviewed the common themes between the interviews that were generated. As noted earlier, very profound or important comments may carry great information and are noted separately from the common themes. Sub themes that developed outside the initial list of themes required a new code to document these phenomena. Narrative from interviews to support how child welfare practice was conducted was cautiously noted as to not identify any participant.

The content analysis for the case files consisted of noting specific words in the file that indicated the use of traditional practices. The predefined word list consisted of: (a) community, (b) four directions, (c) elders, (d) tradition, (e) stories, (f) history, (g) ceremonies, (h) circles, and (i) wellness. This researcher coded for the existence of the concept in each file reviewed. The coding rules used were the specific words in the their plural or singular form. Words that described a specific type of a word counted towards the existence of that word. For example, if a specific ceremony was described in the file

that word or words was coded as the existence of the term ceremony in the file. Each file was coded by hand and the information was stored on this researcher's personal password protected computer. The data found in the files was used to validate information from the interviews and literature.

Validity and reliability.

 Stake (1995) noted the researcher should create a design that strives towards an indisputable portrayal of the case. Validity is a key concept that each researcher must be aware of as they pursue their design. Stake (2006) explained that it is important to find mistakes in one's research and that recognition of the research design's limitations brings more credibility. Creswell (2007) took a more modern view of validity in qualitative designs by looking for *structural corroboration.* Structural corroboration explores whether the available data leads the researcher to be confident in the findings. In order to build confidence in the possible findings, multiple sources of data (literature, interviews, and case files) were applied.

 The next area in validity to be reviewed is whether research can be generalized. The issue that may arise from a single case study is whether it can be applied beyond the single case itself (Yin, 2009). In order to work with this limitation of a single case design, findings were compared to the literature in determining whether the findings were generalizable beyond the single case itself. Once validity was established in this case study the next area to explore regarding the data was reliability.

 Reliability looks towards the accuracy of data. This researcher employed several strategies in order to build the reliability of the data. In regards to the documenting the interviews, audio equipment was tested prior to use to ensure voices recorded were

understood and at what distances. A test of the audio equipment was conducted prior to the interviews to ensure the available equipment would capture the interview. No audio taped interviews were the chosen method of the participants to document the interview. Notes taken during the interviews were documented by this researcher as detailed as possible. The measures taken helped increase the reliability of the data that was collected.

Guide for the case study report.

In preparing the report, Stake (1995) noted several components that should be taken into consideration as part of the design. First the researcher should understand whom the audience might include. For this particular study the audience may be academic colleagues, research committee members, nonspecialists and Woodland Tribal members. Due to the wide range of people who may read the report, the report should be written for a broad range of readers. Stake (1995) viewed how the report is organized is key to exploring the case. How the data will be discussed will start with a narrative description of the data through a discussion of key themes that developed from the data, a review of the content analysis of the files, a summary of understanding regarding the case, and final closing or reflection. Stake (1995) suggested that the aforementioned process is a better method than traditional research report designs as a case is not a problem or hypothesis. The importance of a case study is to assist the reader to gain an understanding of how something functions (Stake, 2006).

Limitations

There are limitations that exist with a case study methodology. Stake (2006) indicated that it is up to each reader to conclude what were the specific findings as they read a case study. This particular viewpoint made generalization to other tribal communities

difficult. In order to combat this limitation the themes/issues were compared to the current literature in order to show there was a connection to the broader research.

The next limitation of this research design was the determination of which theme/issue would carry significance in the case of a single instance.   As this study is reviewed, each person may have a different concept of what may be important to him or her as they read. By only taking the perspective of the researcher other single instances may have been missed that could be have been viewed as significant.

One major concern noted by Yin (2009) regarding case studies is the lack using good methodology to conduct studies. Poor methodology is usually due to the researcher not possessing knowledge to appropriately conduct case studies (Yin, 2009). This researcher's inexperience regarding conducting case studies was a limitation of this study. In order to lessen the impact of this researcher's inexperience conducting case studies, books by Yin and Stake were used in order to create the best possible method to conduct this research.   The main point of this research is best summarized by a quote from Uncheedah, "When you see a new trail, or a footprint you do not know, follow it to the point of knowing" (Nerburn, 1999, p. 78).

Findings

The findings regarding this research project bring to conclusion several months of developing an understanding of Native American culture and a specific community's Indian Child Welfare system. The Woodland People were very gracious in providing an opportunity to learn about their community.   The findings represented in this research only provide a meager view of the richness of history and traditions that are part of the Woodland People. The information contributed by the Woodland People's ICW workers

provided a unique perspective in a system that was not developed by Native Americans, yet is applied in Native American communities. It is also a larger reflection of what the community is experiencing as a whole. One participant explained, "There is a struggle between the white world versus the Native American world. It is hard to know what is normal."

Four Indian Child Welfare workers shared their story in developing this case study. Building upon the information gathered during interviews, each ICW worker's open cases were also reviewed to build upon the knowledge obtained during the interviews. The Indian Child Welfare workers described and explained the Woodland People's culture as it is used within the context of child welfare. The analysis of the data provided a story of unique insight to the application of culture in a child welfare system. The data also demonstrated the experiences in the Woodland People's community is also a reflection of findings within the literature. Not all significant findings within the interviews were related solely to the specific themes of the interviews. Each ICW worker brought a unique perspective, which brought a greater understanding to this case study. These perspectives will be noted separately in this section.

Description of the Data

The data that will be described were from the interviews conducted with the ICW workers and information viewed from ICW files. The description of the data will start with a view of the ICW workers and key themes from the data.

Characteristics of participants

The participants in this study came from varying histories and cultures. Each participant currently works in Indian Child Welfare for the Woodland People's

community. Half of the participants viewed themselves as Native American.   Three

participants considered themselves as part of the community in excess of 10 years. One

participant considered themself as part of the community a year or less. The educational

background for each person varied. Most notably each ICW worker stressed the

importance of gaining education through exposure of daily life working within the

community. All workers had some specific formal education on Native American

culture. Table 1 represents the education that was noted from the participants.

Table 1

Types of Education Noted by the Indian Child Welfare Workers

Education	ICW Worker 1	ICW Worker 2	ICW Worker 3	ICW Worker 4
Social Work Degree	No	No	No	No
Another Degree	Yes	No	Yes	No
Native American Studies Classes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Community Learning	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Aside from the formal education that each ICW worker received, a vital part of his or

her education was learned through life experience. Allen (2002) noted that experience

with local customs is important in assessing Native American families. Each ICW

worker commented that a big portion of their education was gleaned from the

community. Several comments made by the ICW workers on their education included:

o   "I understand what wellness is through exposure."

o   "I learned practices through personal experiences."

o   "I grew up in Native culture and I know how family dynamics are different."

o   "I met with an elder and he reminded me that I was to bring him an offering of

tobacco if you want me to tell you something."

Each ICW worker had very different exposures to the community based upon time in the

community, whether they grew up in a Native American Community, and connections

established within the community.

     Based upon each worker's connection to the community there were marked

differences in what cultural understanding would be used in assessing a family's cultural

connection. Through the interview process, it was discovered that being Native American

did not equate to the ICW worker having a greater understanding of the Woodland

People's culture.   One ICW worker noted that they had been in the community for 17

years and even though the worker was not Native American, this worker had a good

understanding of local culture. This was evident by this worker's comment, "You just

know by being around the community who is involved with their culture. You talk to

elders, you see them at pow-wows, you see the outfits they make, and are they at feasts."

Another worker noted, "I am still learning about this tribe. Even though I grew upon in a

Native culture, people are different."

Each ICW worker had a unique education on the Woodland People's culture, history, and wellness. The education type and amount of time in the community impacted what information each worker had regarding the Woodland People's community. One worker even noted that depending upon which family in the community you were associated with may impact what information you are able to obtain. The understanding of the people who participated in this study was just the beginning in developing the ICW worker's story.

Data analysis process

Data collection started with noting the surroundings in which the interviews took place. Each interview took place at the Woodland People's Social Service Department. Upon entry a display of a traditional headdress was in the lobby. There were many signs with the local language in the waiting area as well. In another part of the waiting area there were toys for children. The toys consisted of both Native American themed and mainstream culture toys such as a Superman figure.

All participants chose to have the interviews take place in their work environment. The meeting room at the office was the chosen location. Hand written notes of the interviews was the method to document the interviews, as it was the preferred method of the participants. As the interviews went on, I noticed some concepts that were familiar within the literature. As more interviews took place I noticed some themes emerge. After the interviews, I reviewed and coded the notes. After initial themes were coded, I reviewed the notes again to define other possible themes that were not initially identified. I wanted to make sure key themes were not missed. Three main themes of the interviews emerged as a result of the data analysis. A review of each main theme was conducted to

identify subthemes.   As the notes were reviewed other significant ideas were apparent.

Even though these other ideas were not consistently noted in the interviews, they were

important enough to note in order to provide richer information regarding this case study.

Discussion of key themes.

The interviews conducted produced three main themes in gaining an understanding of

how ICW workers considered culture within their work. The themes were created by

reviewing commonalities of the interviews of four Indian Child Welfare workers from the

Woodland People's community. The three themes that were common to all interviews

included: (a) loss within the Woodland People, (b) inconsistencies with practice, and (c)

understanding of Indian Child Welfare. The theme of loss within the Woodland People

had three subthemes that included: (a) loss of community, (b) loss of elders, and (c) loss

of culture. Amid the theme of inconsistencies with practice, two subthemes emerged

which included: (a) inconsistencies in traditions, and (b) inconsistencies in Indian Child

Welfare practice. The theme understanding of Indian Child Welfare practice included

three subthemes: (a) understanding of the importance of culture in practice, (b)

understanding from the community of ICW practice, and (c) understanding of how to

incorporate local culture in practice. These themes are outlined in Table 2. Most of the

themes within the interviews did relate to the literature.

Loss within the Woodland People.

One of the major themes from the interview notes was the theme of loss. In every

interview each ICW worker within the first three questions of the interview gave a

message of loss. Their story included losses from the past, current, and worries about the

future. Their stories of loss were heard in each voice as a great concern. The losses

presented were significant and daunting for a small group of ICW workers to impact.

The subthemes of loss that were described included loss of community, elders, and

culture. This story of loss is very similar to the loss described in the literature.

Table 2

Themes and Sub-Themes

Themes		
Loss within the Woodland People	Inconsistencies in Practice	Understanding of Indian Child Welfare
Sub-Themes		
Loss of Community	Tradition inconsistencies	Understanding of Culture in Practice
Loss of Elders	Indian Child Welfare Inconsistencies	Understanding ICW from the Community
Loss of Culture		Understanding of Incorporating Local Culture in Practice

Loss of community.

The ICW workers from the Woodland People described similar experiences how the

loss of community has impacted their ability to assess parenting practices. Historically

this community's land was described as being divided into small communities that are

not connected. One worker commented, "There are too many communities and they are

wide apart."

This division has created a loss of community in several different ways as described by the ICW workers. Slowly shifting traditions that differ from each other are partially the result of the distance that divides the community as a whole. Because of the distance between communities, one ICW worker explained that there is a lack of communication between communities. Traditions once practiced as a whole community are now done more locally. This view can be seen through one comment during the interviews, "Each community does things a bit different, so it's hard for the whole community to come together." Because traditions have changed from one community to the next, it was described to me that those who are very rooted in tradition will not participate in communities or ceremonies where changes have occurred.

   The very notion of even belonging to a community has changed with Woodland People families. Having a sense of belonging to a community is being lost. One worker noted, "A lot are doing it on their own. This is not how it is supposed to be. Disconnect from the community is common, and then people feel like a failure. Young mothers have a misconception of doing it all by themselves."

   Loss of culture.

   The ICW workers noted concerns that the families on their caseload are disconnected with their culture. A worker noted, "No parents that I am working with practice traditions daily. All these cases are going to lead to a termination of parental rights or guardianships. The picture for the parents is not coming together." One worker noted, "Fathers are not being a part of children's lives." This will also lead to a loss of culture as the ICW worker noted that fathers are the storytellers.   Still another view of how culture is being lost was noted, "Some people don't have a sense of history. No

ceremonies are performed. People don't practice naming ceremonies or ceremonies around deer hunting. Some people have forgot." During one interview a worker noted, "This is not the culture we know. It is bad medicine."

As the community continues to be divided not only by distance but practices, the original culture will continue to be diluted. One worker pointed out another part of culture that is disappearing, "Very few people can speak our language." An ICW worker noted, "Professionals in the tribal community have a fear that culture is going to be lost. Our Tribal Chair also recognizes this problem." Despite this view there was a dissenting opinion in the community. It was stated, "our generation is getting it, we went through a period of culture loss but now it's starting to change more."

The ICW workers noted that there is significant loss within the community. Some losses are a result of historical factors that exist still today. Some are newer challenges as the passing of the elders of the community push the Woodland People to view what may happen to their culture. Even though these losses are feared there is a new generation that is seeking to reclaim their culture.

Loss of elders.

Each ICW worker noted the importance of elders in their community as they discussed how important it was to connect elders with families that are part of the ICW system. An ICW worker noted, "The more exposure there is to elders, the less issues they have." A major concern with the ICW workers noted was the loss of elders in the community. One ICW worker noted, " My greatest fear is the loss of elders and the knowledge is now gone and meanings are lost." The "elders are leaving" and with them goes the history of the culture of the Woodland People.

The loss of the elders in the Woodland People's community is connected to both other losses noted by the ICW workers. The elders were noted to have the knowledge that has kept the community together through the preservation of the culture. A worker noted this very fact, "This is a loss of knowledge, a lot of our elders are passing. Eventual traditions are going to be lost."

Even though each worker made one comment regarding the loss of elders, the emotions behind the comments made were strong. It is hard to describe in words the body language and the stress behind the words spoken regarding the loss of elders. The ICW worker's words are significant as the loss of elders means something much greater than the loss of the people alone.

One last loss.

There is one last loss that is significant for the ICW workers and families of the Woodland People. This last loss is the loss of time. This loss was not discussed in the formal interview process with the ICW workers. This loss was discussed prior to the interview and in between the interviews. The Social Service Director and ICW workers notified me that the ICW workers were cut back in their work time. Each person was losing 8 hours a week of work if they were not connected to grant funding. This recent event will stress this department even more as each worker described their worry of not being there for the families. The impact of the loss of time is not known at the time this research was conducted but I fear that the personal and community loss may be great as a result.

Inconsistencies in Practice.

The Indian Child Welfare practice the ICW workers of the Woodland People described was various in their response to working with families in the community. They attempted evaluate how best to work within the community with people who may or may not have tradition incorporated into their daily lives. The ICW workers described inconsistencies in practice of their work and practices of traditions in families.

Tradition inconsistencies.

ICW workers noted during the interviews inconsistencies that were present with traditional practices. The ICW workers explained how they are exposed to a wide variety of families whose own practices with traditions vary greatly. Workers are collaborating with elders who practice traditions on a daily basis. They reported that the next generation of elders in some communities don't have strict adherence to tradition and view particular traditions differently. One worker described this difference in the funeral process. This worker noted:

 "Funerals by traditional standards is a four day process with the person buried on

the fourth day. Some next generation elders don't follow the process as strict as

the elders. Depending when the end of the fourth day is they may extend the

burial to the next day. You'll see fluctuations like that."

Another view of inconsistent practices was noted in attending ceremonies especially pow-wows:

"By tradition a person needs to be clean and sober for 4 days prior to participating

in pow-wows and ceremonies. Now you'll see some people coming to pow-wows

and use. They will hide drugs in their dance outfits."

One worker also noted that some elders will hold firm to being sober for 4 days prior to ceremonies and will, "ask the person to leave the ceremony as they are not clear of mind to participate." This worker noted that the elders will also encourage that they should follow tradition and are welcome next time. In other situations it was described that some elders will not say anything if they notice someone is under the influence out of fear. In these situations the tradition of respecting elders is not being held firm. Yet another inconsistency noted by one worker was, "Each community has their own traditions. There are different views on spirit and ceremonies." The workers describe these inconsistencies in using tradition but they also noted families that are assimilated and do not practice many traditions. The assimilation of families was noted by one worker, "I see more families who are losing it, some people haven't been raised in tradition and I have to explain it."

Indian Child Welfare inconsistencies.

The focus and methods of the welfare practice varied between each ICW worker. Some ICW workers described having significant discussion around culture and some do not as they concentrate on chemical dependency issues. One worker described that they don't even discuss traditional practices in parenting, "…because trying to get away from drug and alcohol comes first. It doesn't do any good [referring to discussing traditional practices]." Another worker described that they use the knowledge from "Positive Indian Parenting" which is based upon story telling.

Based upon their time in the community and connections established, each ICW worker's knowledge of the Woodland People's community varies as well. All workers noted the importance of their education from the community. The difference in the

community education impacts the ability to have discussions about community practices or stories that could assist parents in the ICW system.

Another area of inconsistency in practice is the use of an assessment tool in practice. One worker noted using a specific tool that has, "…specific questions regarding culture. The tool was helpful to talk about the topic." Another worker described, "I don't use a specific assessment tool. I use instinct…wherever there is trouble you help. Maybe I learn something from them." A third worker noted another difference, "I don't' use a model. I use more hands on approaches."

How each worker assessed the use of traditional practice in each home was different. One worker showed me how they used a circle, then discussed with the family what encompasses them and then looks where traditional practice is used. Another worker stated the method used is, "I watch, observe, then talk. I look for it with children. They reflect what the parents do." A third worker noted, "I go into the home and look around. What is in the home? I look for smudges, tobacco, and sage. Do they use a pouch of tobacco? I look at where they keep the children. Children are kept close." The last worker noted, "It's known who is involved in traditional activities."

There were also other significant inconsistencies in practice noted in single comments. An important inconsistency noted by one worker was maintaining the same ICW worker for families. That worker discussed the "trauma" that is produced by the system's inconsistency of maintaining ICW workers. Another inconsistency in practice was the ability even to discuss traditions in parenting as noted by, "My idea of parenting is different than Native American parenting so I struggle with it."

Even though each worker's application of child welfare in the Woodland People's community differs, one consistent view was the importance of having traditional practices be the center of wellness. This was evidenced by comments such as:

o   "Bring families to traditional gatherings."

o   "Bring elders to the parents."

o   "Traditional things going every single day are important."

o   "…be creative in incorporating traditions."

Understanding of Child Welfare.

Through the ICW worker interviews conducted for this study a third main theme was developed. The third main theme was around understanding. The data from the interviews pointed to three subthemes that reflect both the ICW workers and community understanding of child welfare practice. The ICW workers' understanding of the use of culture in practice, what was the community's understanding of ICW, and thirdly the understanding of incorporating local culture in practice stood out in the interview process as sub themes.

Understanding of culture in practice.

The workers' interviews demonstrated that they have an understanding of how important culture is in Indian Child Welfare practice. One worker described how wellness is viewed in a Native American community by stating, "Wellness traditionally is a balance between the four directions – physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental." One worker described how the Indian Child Welfare system itself is not part of Native American culture. This person stated, "I don't think the community chose Indian Child Welfare. Historically it was not needed." This worker also went on to describe, "Elders

would provide teachings to parents, and it was not judgmental." The workers noted the use of story telling by this comment, "…story telling was how it was done years ago. When I use it now the response has been good." This comment not only demonstrated cultural knowledge but also success in its use. One worker described how important culture is in practice by noting, "We need traditional things going with our families every single day."

Historical trauma was noted in one occurrence during the interviews. According to one worker "Historical trauma in general has become part of our culture. The results of boarding schools have trickled down through generations. People are now more stand offish." This last comment demonstrated that the ICW workers for the Woodland People in their own way understand how Native American culture is valuable in practice. How the community understood how this knowledge was to be used was not as clear.

Understanding ICW from the community.

The ICW workers from this study noted that the community did not understand the role of Indian Child Welfare. This was exhibited by the many responses of how the ICW workers believed the community perceived their role. During my first interview it was clear from the response that the community may not understand the role of ICW. The comment made was, "Our role is seen as to fix it, and get me this get me that. We are the bad people." This theme carried through the rest of the interviews. During the second interview it was noted, "It is the thought of what are you going to do for me. I have not seen as much entitlement in other tribes." Another view what the community believes was stated as, "Some people think we are here to give gas for their car, give them food. Some people feel they don't understand what are roles are. Some people think we are

here to take kids away." The fourth person noted a similar view. The community

understanding of ICW was, "Not clear, families view us as we take children away instead

of the proactive ways we want to do."

Yet in the middle of these negative viewpoints two workers noted some change that is

happening. One worker stated, "It's gotten better than what it used to be. The

community is becoming more responsive." One worker noted that in one community of

the Woodland People there is a clear understanding of ICW's role as demonstrated by

this comment, "This community refused to work with the county workers until ICW

comes along to make it easier to deal with the whole thing." Most the ICW workers

noted the unclear beliefs regarding ICW practice were common throughout all

communities of the Woodland People. Even though most of the perceptions from how

the community understands the role of ICW as negative, there does appear some change

is happening.

Understanding of incorporating local culture in practice.

Local practitioners of Indian Child Welfare for the Woodland People have

demonstrated the importance of incorporating local culture in their practice. The workers

described their struggles in incorporating local culture with families as part of the

Woodland People's culture is changing. The change in culture with families in the ICW

system has not been positive. One worker noted, " Drugs and alcohol have become

normal. If a child gets removed it's normal for them." Another worker noted, "Families

are having a hard time grasping culture as no traditional values are being used." Still

another view was, "In our community we are to respect everything, yet there is a lack."

One worker was asked by a child, "Why do we have long hair?" The worker noted that

the child had not been taught that it is a sign of strength. Yet another comment noted

another community dilemma; "The Woodland People's community has the mind set that

fathers do not do child rearing…There are a lot of broken homes and the male figure is

not there." This worker was clear that traditionally with the Woodland People fathers

play a key role in raising children. One last view was noted by this worker comment,

"The families that are seen are not involved in tradition. You see their history and you

see that they get farther away from traditional activities."

In spite of these changes noted in local culture with the families, the ICW workers are

very persistent in trying to incorporate traditional local culture in their practice.   Two

workers noted that if children do have to be removed for safety concerns that they first

look for traditional homes. If there are no homes available and non-traditional foster

homes must be used then incorporating local culture is attempted. One worker noted,

"We try to get them to pow-wows or help them make pow-wow outfits." Another worker

noted, "Tradition is about teaching children."

The ICW workers noted the use of elders in the community to educate. One comment

mentioned their commitment to have the knowledge to give to families; "We look for

information to educate, we do a lot of research. If we have questions with traditions, we

go to the elders." Most workers noted the use of elders in their practice with families.

Locally elders were noted to be very important to the Woodland People. One worker

noted, "The community culture is focused on the elders. We look to the elders for

guidance."

In conducting their work, the ICW workers have used traditional methods in helping

families. One worker noted, "If you just show someone something on paper it won't

work. Traditional methods are about teaching and story telling…we need to get families together to traditional gatherings and through one cohesive group the learning of practices can happen." Another way a worker described using local traditions was in the reunification process in which it was described, "We talk about customs and traditions later when looking at reunification. We use it in planning the children's return." Another use of local traditions used in current practice was an attempt by one worker for a child to see the community's "Medicine Man" for issues where other mainstream culture services were not effective.

Each worker's response to the question about any recommendations to change current ICW practice all incorporated the use of local traditions. Comments noted regarding this question were:

o   "We need to have positive outing in the community so they live it every day."

o   "We need to give an opportunity for tools to be used once traditions are learned."

o   "Have kids remain with family is the best for children. Who are going to continue with traditions? Who is involved with them in daily traditions?"

In my interviews with the ICW workers their passion and understanding about the use of local cultural practices and their importance was evident. Even though an understanding exists, the ability to incorporate best practice can be best summarized by this worker's comment, "I would like to see more families engaged in it [the community culture]. I have a hard time, a hard time understanding why the community doesn't engage in something so important that is available to them."

The data gathered from interviews produced three main themes:

o   Loss within the Woodland People

o   Inconsistencies in Practice

o   Understanding of Indian Child Welfare

I was excited to see the findings reflect much of the information that was noted in the

literature review. As I was about to begin to conduct file reviews, I was looking forward

to documenting the content of the files as I was anticipating a similar result.   In the next

section, information that was found in the files will be discussed to help bring a further

understanding of Indian Child Welfare practice in the Woodland People's community.

Discussion of File Reviews

As I started the file review through the method of conducting a content analysis, I was

not sure what I was going to discover, as each interview was very unique, would I find

the same in the files? I was looking for key concepts that were noted in the literature: (a)

community, (b) four directions, (c) elders, (d) traditions, (e) stories, (f) history, (g)

ceremonies, (h) circles, and (i) wellness. As I looked in the files it was not clear to me to

where I would locate an assessment specifically regarding any use of traditional practices

on behalf of the parents. I then looked for opportunities within the file where the parents

were discussed within the context of their use of the aforementioned concepts.

Based upon the interviews in which the workers described that either they "Don't" use

an assessment tool, or that they use "instinct", or it is more of a "conversation" I should

not have expected to see a great deal of information in the file reviews. Yet by the

amount of information they clearly had regarding culture and the community, I started to

review the files expecting to see a great deal documented. This view was my own

researcher bias based upon my world viewpoint. What I was expecting to see in a file was

based upon other child protection files seen in either county or state government agencies.

   As I reviewed the interview notes and the information the ICW workers shared, I realized that written documentation was not how information is shared in this community. Information was shared by talking, watching others, and listening to what people say. What the ICW workers described about their practice had very little to do with any written documentation, forms, and formal processes. As I reflected back on my research process, I started to wonder what information could be gathered in the data and how relevant can it be in a community where information is not usually processed through paper? Table 3 represents the content analysis.

   The data noted out of 234 possible opportunities for the concepts to appear in 26 different files, only 33 occurrences existed. The files had 14 percent of the opportunities regarding the noted concepts existing in the files. Ten out of the 26 files contained zero instances of the content. One file by itself contained 6 instances of the content, which was almost 19 percent of all occurrences. No other file had more than 4 out of the 8 concepts represented in the file. The concept that was most represented in the files was that of community, which appeared in 12 files. The next highest represented concept was traditions, which appeared in 7 files. The concept of elders, which was vital not only in the literature review but also in the worker interviews was not recorded in any file.

   In reviewing the files for content of important Native American concepts, one area that was consistent from the interview themes was inconsistencies in practice. There was not a clear method on how to report on a family's use of traditions as it related to parenting or even if they should be reported. The files were not a representation of the

knowledge the ICW workers possessed regarding the families involved in the ICW system.

Table 3

Occurrence of Key Native American Concepts

Case	Community	Four	Elders	Traditions	Storie	History	Ceremonies	Circles	Wellness
1	Y								
2								Y	
3	Y						Y		
4	Y								
5	Y			Y			Y		
6	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y		Y
7	Y								
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13				Y					
14									
15	Y								
16									
17									
18									
19				Y		Y	Y		
20	Y								
21	Y								
22	Y			Y					
23	Y			Y		Y	Y		
24	Y				Y	Y			
25				Y			Y		
26									
T	12	0	0	7	2	4	6	1	1

Note: Y = the existence of the concept in the file.

Summary

The participants in this study discussed many relevant issues related to their work with the Woodland People in child welfare. Many of the comments stated by the ICW workers closely relate back to the literature regarding the main themes and sub themes developed in the interviews. Also at times there were noted differences from the key themes found. The content analysis did prove useful in supporting one of the sub themes of the interviews. Further discoveries of the application of the data will be part of the discussion section of this research.

<div align="center">

Discussion

</div>

The research examined the ICW system of the Woodland People through the experiences and knowledge of the current ICW workers of that system. The framework, which the research was based upon, was from both a professional and theoretical lens. This section will examine the findings through both lenses along with further exploration of what knowledge was gained based upon the findings. As part of this section the strengths and limitations of this research will be reviewed, recommendations for future research, implications for social worker practice, and implications for future policies will be discussed.

Review Through a Theoretical Lens

Systems Theory was the theoretical lens used for this research. To review, Barker (2003) emphasized the interconnection between the person, institutions, societies, and surroundings as a description of Systems Theory. The ICW workers from Woodland People community are part of a welfare system on two different levels. In one instance they are part of a formalized system in place to assist in the protection of children. The

second system in which they operate is part of a cultural system. This section will look at the role the ICW worker plays in both systems.

Child protection system.

The ICW worker is part of institution that works directly with people from the Woodland People's community. As the interviews from the ICW workers noted there is not a clear connection between the community's understanding of ICW and how the ICW worker related back to the community. Hodge and Limb (2010) noted in working with Native American communities partnership is key. In this community, the ICW workers described the connection as one of mistrust, misunderstanding, and one of power differential due to the belief that their main role is to take children away from families.

The child welfare system is also disconnected due to recent decisions at an organizational level to reduce the hours of work for the ICW workers. The workers now see their work as being devalued. One worker noted, "ICW need the full support of the tribe and tribal counsel. It is a depressed program." The ICW system as described by the ICW workers did not possess the interconnectedness to support a well functioning system at a community and organizational level.

At a micro level, this system of workers works closely together towards a common goal. They have demonstrated through their knowledge of community what traditional factors impact parenting. Even though their methods may differ, the passion they have for protecting children and the use of the Woodland People's culture in practice was cohesive.

Cultural system.

The circle is a key visual in Native American culture as it represents that everything is connected. Portman and Garrett (2006) noted the "way of the circle" which are the codes, stories, traditions, customs, and teachings that develop a community's culture. The ICW worker has a unique role in the Woodland People's cultural system. They are part of a story that has a very negative past historically which has impacted the circle not being whole and connected. Yet they are a key part now and in the future that is working hard towards keeping the culture moving forward.

The interviews conducted with the ICW workers indicated that they are attempting to keep the community's culture and traditions at the forefront while working with families who are not in "balance". Schweigman et al. (2011) noted that the use of traditions in Native American communities could be integral to the harmonizing of the individual and community. By their continued effort to work in a culturally sensitive fashion with families, the culture of the community can only be strengthened. Without the interventions described by the ICW workers to increase a family's cultural awareness, where are families who are disconnected from community, who have had few teachings about their culture, or who may be out of balance in their life going to learn to be part of a healthy cultural system?

The ICW workers have a key role in keeping the current culture thriving. First they recognized that the community is coming to a crossroads in their future whether the community's culture will be preserved. Second they have the knowledge and connections within the community to build alliances with elders, traditional community events, and

resources that promote cultural development. Looking at it from a systems perspective they are key in the interconnectivity of a variety of parts within the larger cultural system.

Review Through a Professional Lens

As noted previously, NASW (2013a) has indicated that one method to combat social injustice is through the use of sharing knowledge about culture. This research experience has provided a wealth of knowledge not only about Native Americans in general but also about the Woodland People's community. This research also provided a unique experience to understand Indian Child Welfare work, which may be shared as well.

Summary of knowledge

This story was about a unique set of people in a unique community. The Woodland People are people who are rooted in the culture and traditions. Goins et al. (2010) found when there is greater cultural identity and engagement in tradition it directly related to better caregiving. The Woodland People have four people who are dedicated to helping the community's parents gain identity with their community and work on engaging others in tradition. The families that are engaged with Indian Child Welfare are most often caught between cultures. As noted by Herring (1998) when Native Americans live a dualistic life, stress increases.

The story that the ICW workers see on a daily basis is one of stress. The stress comes from all directions. The loss that is seen by each ICW worker is at both a community and individual level. The community has been split apart by historical factors that has led to a loss of land and as generations have departed a loss of community as a whole. Traditions have also faded with the splitting of community and especially with the loss of the elders in the community. The families that enter into the Indian Child Welfare system

of the Woodland People are those most severely impacted by loss. Most often the families seen have very little ties to tradition and community, which are key protective factors in Native American communities according to Morris and Wood (2010).

This story goes on to look at how ICW workers from the Woodland People try to work with families in traditional methods and teach families with little understanding. Each worker has tried to educate themselves not only through formal means but also through traditional methods by learning from the elders of the community and others who know the community. These workers have their own stories to pass on. They have worked on what Weaver (1999) equates to cultural competency: knowledge, skills, and values. Each worker demonstrated knowledge of history, culture, and the current issues that face the families they serve. They use skills taught to them by the elders or classes to try to engage families in tradition and their culture. They use stories to help parents problem solve. Each worker also has values to help keep tradition, to pass on knowledge of the community's culture, and they value the importance of their work.

Even with the knowledge, skills and values they possess, how it is incorporated is as different as each individual. Each worker is trying some method to engage the family on their caseload in traditional parenting, but as one worker noted, "…it's a hard time for some to grasp the culture as there are no traditional values being used in the home." For the ICW workers it is not a matter of do they incorporate traditions and culture in their practice but how do they assist those who don't understand the culture they live in or are afraid to participate due to their own history and how they may be perceived. As described in the literature connection to culture is vital in maintaining wellness by either the four directions view or the use of circles. The families described by the ICW workers

are not in balance. A key part of the ICW worker's job is assessing this balance. As noted earlier by Herring (1998) as traditions are lost so are the connections to wellness and balance.

The plot of this story thickens as ICW workers from the Woodland People engage with their families and try to assess who they are and what are the family connections to their culture. Workers use observation and conversation mostly to gain an understanding of parental practices. What the ICW workers discover is rarely formalized in writing. Like most knowledge, it is kept as the elders of the community have taught. The knowledge is kept within that ICW worker to be shared with others in the systems that are assisting the family in the community. One important piece of information shared outside of the formal interviews was, "Culture and traditions are not written down. This is the result of historical trauma." This comment ties directly back to the "Civilizing Period" noted by Mooradian el al. (2006). As it was told to me by a community member that as people were put in boarding schools, traditional practice went, "underground". If traditions were practiced it could mean, "a beating in the boarding schools" or even worse death at the hands of the government. Morrison (1998) noted that children received a variety of consequences for speaking their native language. As a method of protection traditions were not written because if they were found, the result was severe. Seeing the results of the content analysis makes perfect sense for this community, as the key concepts that were noted in the literature are practices that are not written down. Reviewing the concept that was noted the most, community, also should make sense, as the broad concept of community would not divulge specific traditions or cultural practices. The non-disclosure of specific family practice follows the notion from the

literature that the way of the circle is the unwritten code in which to live (Portman & Garrett, 2006). Since a great deal of the knowledge that ICW workers seek to assist families is passed on from elders, loss of elders in the community creates even more difficulties for the ICW workers.

As one ICW worker noted, "Elders are the base of our culture." The concern that has been presented in the data is that the base of the Woodland People's culture is eroding. What faces the Woodland People's ICW workers is how will culture and tradition be incorporated when that knowledge is disappearing or it differs from its origins to be something different. Mooradian et al. (2006) stressed the importance of the elders to maintaining a community's culture and the connection to wellness. Each ICW worker noted this connection in his or her interview.   The loss of knowledge from elders poses a significant barrier as who will they turn to for their education to assist families. This point is stressed in Nerburn's (1999) work where it was noted that teaching is conducted by "example and instruction" as learning done "second-hand" is a "dead language".

The ICW workers from the Woodland People do use traditions and community culture in their practice. However, they face many barriers that are not only from the past but those that are current, which will impact the future of their practice. How do they incorporate culture and traditions of the community with those who have no understanding or connections to the community?   As this story has noted, the ICW workers are practicing in a "…culture they do not know, it is bad medicine." It is a pivotal time for the Woodland People's culture. This case study set out to explore how ICW workers for the Woodland People incorporate culture and traditions in their practice. Despite the lack of an education in social work, the ICW workers use the most

important type of knowledge to have; knowledge of the Woodland People's culture,

traditions, and people. Based not only on the literature but also through the ICW workers

interviews, without the knowledge that is contained in the community, practice even for

the most educated would not be very successful. What this case study also has shown is

the historical impact of the loss this community has endured and the struggles each ICW

worker must face to protect the children that are seen as a gift from the Creator (Subia

BigFoot & Funderburk, 2011).   This case study is just one small chapter in a story yet to

be finished in a very strong tradition based community.

Limitations and Strengths of the Data

Due to the time constraints and other factors of this study, there are limitations with

the data collected. One of the main limitations of the study was conducting a content

analysis regarding the case files and only looking for the existence of concepts. What is

not captured in the content analysis is how little was discussed regarding the concepts

even though they were present. The content analysis does not truly reflect how little

information was present in the case file reviews. The relevance of this information would

added more depth to the understanding around how information is shared by the

community. Another limitation was the small sample size that was available. Even

though the small sample provides an opportunity to have more in depth information, it

does not consider the possible group think mentality that may occur in small

organizations. If the sample were increased to include others who work with the ICW

workers or parents involved in ICW, would the data possess the same themes? As noted

in the methods section limitations, coding is done through the lens of the researcher and

there is the possibility of unintentional bias during the coding part of this study. One

method employed to reduce bias was to have this researcher's committee review the methodology of the research.

   This research process did possess several strengths due to the organization of the research and the participants themselves. The utilization of a qualitative format was a strength for this study. By the use of interviews that allowed for a free exchange of information, the richness of the information was enhanced. Another strength was the methodology of a case study. A case study assists the reader in trying to become immersed within the case itself and the experiences of the researcher. The participants were the strength for this research due to their openness and willingness to share knowledge that was not previously available.

Future Considerations for Social Work

   This particular study was just an initial view into this case. Plenty of opportunities exist in either practice or research to implement information from this study. In the area of practice, written assessment methods used due to expectations of state regulations or other written assessment models are not culturally compatible for the Woodland People. The methods used by the ICW workers regarding their assessment being a conversation or experiential fits the culture of the Woodland People.   Hodge and Limb (2010) explained that a spiritual assessment is key to understanding wellness and is vital for practice decisions when working with Native Americans in child welfare. There is an opportunity at a practice level to develop an assessment that uses the concept of wellness in conversation and use the community's culture to decide how it may be preserved. Traditional practices then could be discussed to meet the needs identified. Research around the implementation of a new assessment process could produce valuable

information not only to this community but others as well. Another opportunity for practice enhancement is to pool the knowledge with the elders of the ICW system so that there is a model of learning for new workers. This practice would also role model how traditions are passed to the next generation of ICW workers.

Research with this community is a vast opportunity. As noted in the limitations section of the data, a researcher could expand upon the pool of interviewees to gain a broader perspective. If a new assessment method was used, research could be conducted to note the effectiveness of such a new method and could it be generalized to other Native American communities. There would be the possibility to go back in a few years and conduct the same research questions and look for any change within the system. There also could be the opportunity to bring this research to another Native American community and look for the commonalities. The potential for new research is expansive and so are the possibilities for practice improvement.

Another area to be studied further is in regards to policy in education. In this study it was clear that formal education in social work was not necessary for practice to be culturally appropriate. Is there something that the educational system in social work could do better to prepare for work in Native American communities or create a policy where social work students go to Native American communities to learn first hand about culture to facilitate greater learning. According to Subia BigFoot & Funderburk (2011), the process of understanding parental beliefs comes first when working with Native American families. As noted in the interviews without the connection to the community, gaining the understanding would be very difficult. The ICW workers each had a connection to the community in some way. Investigation on how historical trauma and

mistrust in the educational system could also be explored regarding the reason why it is hard to find Native American social workers. The literature does point out that social work was created from a Eurocentric point of view and early social work came from people of privilege.   As Allen (2002) discussed that Native American communities have distrust in systems; therefore necessitates a culturally relevant service system. Social Work educational programs will need to examine policy to determine if they are preparing students to be part of such systems.

Conclusion

The Woodland People are rich in their culture, traditions, and values. The ICW worker has a vital role within this system to keep the culture moving forward to future generations. The data is clear that ICW workers do incorporate culture and traditions in their practice; however, they do have barriers to continue to support their practice. The barriers they must face daily are extremely stressful, yet there is an energy that exists with this group of people to not become part of the deterioration of the Woodland People's culture. This small chapter of the story of Indian Child Welfare as it relates to the incorporation of culture and traditions in practice does not do justice to their story as a people. This study is also only one part of a community and misses out on a great deal that is positive with the Woodland People. Looking three generations back has led to the ICW worker having to struggle to keep culture alive with children of today. Are there practice changes to be done to make sure there is another three generations of Woodland People who know their culture? Nerburn (1999) noted the following from the Constitution of the Five Nations:

Look and listen for the welfare of the whole people and have always in view not only the present but also the coming generations, even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the earth – the unborn of the future Nation. (pp. 24-25)

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

GRSW682 RESEARCH PROJECT

A Case Study: Native American Traditions in Child Welfare Assessments

I am conducting a study about child welfare parenting assessments to determine if the are culturally sensitive. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because of your work with Child Welfare families. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Timothy Markgraf, a graduate student at the School of Social Work, Catherine University/University of St. Thomas and supervised by Dr. Felicia Sy.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is: to gather information regarding how child welfare practices incorporate culture and traditions in assessing parental capacities and determine how traditional tribal practices impact participation in child welfare.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things: Participate in an interview that is approximately 45 minutes to an hour in length. Your interview will be used in a presentation at the conclusion of the GRSW 682 course that is open to the public. No identifying information will be used regarding the individuals interviewed. You have a choice in which how your interview will be documented. You have a choice to either have your interview audio taped or the researcher will take hand written notes with no identifiers attached to the notes.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There is minimal risk or benefits associated with this study. There is some minimal risk associated with reacll or recognition of uncomfortable events associated with child welfare practice. All particpants will be ecnouranged to end the interview at any time for any reason in order to take care of themselves. The study has no direct benefits or monetary rewards for the interviewee.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential for this study. Each volunteer will have the option of how a record of the interview is documented. Each person based upon their unique culture may choose to have their interview documented either by audio recorder or by hand written notes. Research notes will be kept in a locked storage box in a locked personal office. Any audiotapes of interviews will also be stored in a locked storage box. No identifying information will be used on the notes taken. The notes taken will be destroyed at the end of the research project in a fashion that will be culturally sensitive. Backup of information will be stored on this researcher's personal computer that will be password protected. You may at any time ask for this information to be destroyed and not be used in further studies. There is a possibility that the Woodland Tribe from the Midwest may use this research for the betterment of tribal services. At the conclusion of this study the final document will be made public and respondents may have access to the final product upon request.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. At any time during the recruiting or interview process you may choose to end your participation. During the interview process you may skip any questions you do not wish to answer and may stop the interview at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Catherine University, the University of St. Thomas, or the School of Social Work. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected about you will not be used.

Contacts and Questions

My name is Tim Markgraf. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at 3xx-xxx-xxxx. Dr. Felicia Sy may be reached at 6xx-xxx-xxxx. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-5341 with any questions or concerns.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study and to be audiotaped.

_____   _____

Signature of Study Participant   Date

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the interview and I do not consent to have my interview audiotaped.

_____

Print Name of Study Participant

_____   _____

Signature of Researcher   **Date**

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Questions for Qualitative Interview

1) Introduction: Introduce myself along with covering the consent form.

2) What is title for the Woodland People?

3) Please describe the training you received regarding Native American history, culture, and concept of wellness.

4) Please describe your understanding of the Woodland People's history, culture and concept of wellness.

5) Are there different traditions practiced in different Woodland People communities? If so please describe your understanding of them.

6) How do you discuss with families their use of tradition in parenting?

7) Please describe how you incorporate traditional practices in your child welfare assessment of families.

8) Please describe your understanding of how the current child welfare practice for the Woodland People was developed.

9) Who created the model for your assessments of families in the Woodland People's Welfare System?

10) Describe how the assessment tool is used to incorporate Woodland People's customs.

11) Are there any community barriers that prevent people sharing how traditional practices are incorporated in their lives?

12) What are the community expectations of ICW workers?

13) Please describe any common practices in ICW that incorporates traditional practices in the assessment phase.

14) How are the concepts of tribal history, cultural practices and concepts of wellness represented in the child welfare assessment?

15) Are there other methods you use as a practitioner to assess parenting practices that use traditional methods?

16) Do you have any recommendations regarding ICW practice and the incorporation of traditional practices?

17) Is there any other information that you would like to share regarding the impact of traditional practices and the Woodland People's child welfare system?

18) Ending: Thank the interviewee for their time and provide them again a phone number if they have any further questions regarding this study.

Appendix C

Organization Letter

November 18, 2013

Tim Markgraf

1006 Gateway Blvd NW

Waverly, IA 50677

Dear Tim,

Thank you for contacting me regarding the research project for your Master's Degree. I am pleased to let you know that you have the support of the Woodland People's Social Services Department. You may contact my staff to determine their willingness to participate in your research project with the understanding that you will protect the confidentiality of all participants in your research.

I do not anticipate any risk to our organization or to our participating staff. However, I do believe your research will add powerful insight to your project and to your field of study.

You have my support and I will help you in any way I can. Please feel free to contact me anytime. And good luck in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

Social Services Director

Appendix D

Email to Participants

Dear Woodland People's ICW Worker

My name is Tim Markgraf, a Masters in Social Work student with the University of St. Thomas. Your Social Service Director has agreed to allow me the opportunity to conduct a study on how child welfare assessments in a Native American community incorporate local traditions. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because this study relates specifically to the child welfare practices of the Woodland People Community. Please read the attached consent form and feel free to ask any questions regarding your participation. You will be contacted by phone in one week from the date of this email to determine your willingness to participate and to go over any questions about the consent form.

If you choose to participate, an interview date, time and place will be set during the month of February that is most suitable for your needs.

If you have any questions feel free to respond to this email or contact me directly by phone at 3xx-xxx-xxxx.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tim Markgraf