

# Native American Student Experiences of the Academic Library

Rosalind Bucy

Native Americans are underrepresented in higher education; and, while considerable research examines Native student persistence, the role of academic libraries in their experiences has received little attention. This study proposes to investigate Native American undergraduate students' library experiences, needs, and perceptions. Qualitative interviews explored Native student perspectives on library services, space, and culture. Findings suggest that core library services are important to Native students, that visible representation of Native Americans contributes to a sense of belonging, and that Native student identity has varied significance for library use. This study has implications for librarians seeking to improve services for Native students.

## Introduction

Any discussion of Native American<sup>1</sup> engagement in higher education must acknowledge the brutal history of cultural genocide perpetrated by the United States government in the name of educating or “civilizing” Native Americans.<sup>2</sup> Generations of Native children were separated from their families with the goal of forced assimilation. The impacts of the boarding school era—which lasted late into the twentieth century—are still felt in the educational disparities facing Native American students today. Furthermore, the Morrill Act of 1862 established land grant universities through the seizure and sale of Native land.<sup>3</sup> Today, Native students at these institutions often attend class on the unceded land of their ancestors.

The University of Nevada, Reno is a land-grant university located on the western edge of the Great Basin on the traditional lands of the Wašiw (Washoe), Numu (Northern Paiute), Newe (Western Shoshone), and Nuwu (Southern Paiute) peoples. Today, 2.7 percent of the population of the county in which the university resides identifies as American Indian or Alaska Native (AI/AN).<sup>4</sup> However, only 0.7 percent of students enrolled at the university in the fall of 2018 identified as AI/AN.<sup>5</sup> Although a minority of the student body, these students have received increased attention with new programs focused on Indigenous students and studies. Launched in 2017 by the university's Center for Diversity & Inclusion, the Indigenous Research Institute for Student Empowerment seeks to engage Indigenous students in research and encourage them

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to pursue graduate education.<sup>6</sup> The university has also introduced a Paiute language class and an Indigenous Studies minor. Such programs stand to impact Native American students on campus while increasing the need for library services for Native students.

The UNR Libraries consist of the main campus library, The Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center (The Knowledge Center), and three subject libraries: The Jon Bilbao Basque Library, The DeLaMare Science and Engineering Library, and the Savitt Medical Library. The Knowledge Center is centrally located on campus and provides individual and group study space, computers and computer labs, and research and multimedia support, in addition to physical and digital collections. The Knowledge Center is also home to Special Collections & University Archives. Although open to the public, the UNR Libraries primarily serve university students, faculty, and staff. University librarians have supported Indigenous students and programs through targeted collection development, tailored information literacy sessions, and special events such as an open house for Indigenous students featuring Native American special collections. This qualitative study aims to explore Native American students' library experiences, needs, and perceptions to improve library services to Native students.

## Literature Review

### *Native American Students in Higher Education*

Native Americans have long been underrepresented in higher education. While Native American enrollment in colleges and universities doubled between 1976 and 2006, the percentage of Native Americans in higher education remains the lowest among racial/ethnic groups.<sup>7</sup> Among first-time degree-seeking students attending a public four-year institution full-time, the percentage of Native Americans who graduate within six years is lower than that of any other racial/ethnic group (39% among AI/AN students compared to 40% among Black students, 54% among Hispanic students, 64% among White students, and 74% among Asian students).<sup>8</sup> Several studies have examined Native American student persistence in higher education.<sup>9</sup> These studies consistently identify family support as a major factor in Native American student persistence along with institutional support, faculty and staff support, and connection with culture. While both family and culture were found to have conflicting impacts on student persistence, the desire to "give back" to their communities is a major reason Native American students pursue higher education.<sup>10</sup>

The ability of Native American students to navigate cultural factors while on campus impacts their sense of belonging, particularly at predominantly White institutions. Feelings of not belonging can lead students to drop out or step out before completing their degrees.<sup>11</sup> McAfee developed the concept of "stepping out" to describe Native Americans' experiences attending and, in many cases, leaving college due to the personal, cultural, and academic dimensions that can "pull students away from higher education as well as draw them back."<sup>12</sup> Native American student narratives describe how students grapple with identity and belonging in higher education.<sup>13</sup> In their interviews with 24 Native American students, Tachine et al. identified factors contributing to students' sense of belonging in their first year.<sup>14</sup> Their findings highlight the importance of cultural centers and programming in supporting students' feelings of belonging on campus. Cultural centers and programming can help combat what Gusa calls White Institutional Presence, "the White normative messages and practices that are exchanged within the academic milieu."<sup>15</sup> For example, the expectation that students go to college to find themselves and gain independence from their families is a distinctly White

middle-class value that contradicts many Native students' need for cultural connection and desire to give back to their communities.<sup>16</sup>

To support Native students, several scholars have argued that institutions of higher education need to adopt culturally responsive education practices that further the goals of Native American sovereignty, self-determination, and nation building.<sup>17</sup> Building on Critical Race Theory, Brayboy proposed a Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit), which outlines central tenets of a framework to address Native Americans' complex relationship to the United States government and society.<sup>18</sup> Based on the primary tenet that "colonization is endemic to society," TribalCrit articulates eight additional tenets addressing issues such as imperialism, White supremacy, sovereignty, assimilation, liminality, cultural knowledge, and tradition.<sup>19</sup> As such, TribalCrit can provide a useful lens for understanding and addressing issues facing Native American students in higher education.

### *Native American Student Experiences in the Academic Library*

Academic library collections often lack Indigenous perspectives and include culturally inappropriate materials.<sup>20</sup> In discussions with students, researchers have found that Indigenous students notice the dearth of Indigenous materials in their libraries.<sup>21</sup> Aase also found that, while browsing library collections, Native American students encounter problematic and even racist terminology and organization. Notably, Native students identified these problems while their non-Native peers did not.<sup>22</sup> These library collection failures can compound the already harmful effects of researchers routinely viewing Indigenous peoples as subjects of research rather than as researchers themselves.<sup>23</sup> Loyer argues that such experiences are traumatic for Indigenous students conducting research and that teaching self-care is fundamental to Indigenous information literacy.<sup>24</sup>

While Indigenous students note the lack of culturally relevant library collections, their Indigenous identity is not always significant to their library use.<sup>25</sup> In a focus group with Indigenous students about their library needs, students did not mention their Indigenous identity until prompted; even then, they only asked about the library's Indigenous collections.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, Neurohr and Bailey found that, although all Native students interviewed for their study identified aspects of the library related to their Native identity, some students distinguished between their individual and cultural identity when describing their use of the library.<sup>27</sup> That underrepresented students' intersectional identities have varied salience in different campus spaces is echoed in other research.<sup>28</sup>

Indigenous students value functional library spaces and services.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, some students have expressed feelings of alienation, fear, and uncertainty when using the library, feelings that extend to their interactions with library staff as well as their use of the library space.<sup>30</sup> The physical library space is itself a means of validating student identity, and Indigenous students appreciate seeing their culture visibly represented in library spaces.<sup>31</sup> These students have described the presence of displays and exhibits featuring Indigenous culture as a powerful antidote to the erasure of Indigenous peoples.

Although the body of existing research begins to elucidate Native American student experiences in higher education, research into their library experiences remains sparse. The Association of College & Research Libraries' *Diversity Standards* states that "libraries have to open their arms to all perspectives and experiences."<sup>32</sup> Yet little research exists on Native American students' experiences of academic libraries. To support Native American students,

academic librarians need to understand the experiences and perspectives of these students in their own right.<sup>33</sup> While the Native American population is diverse, and defining a singular Native student experience ought not to be attempted, discerning individual experiences can shed light on the collective experiences of the group. This study proposes to explore the questions: What are Native American undergraduate students' experiences with the library? What are Native American undergraduate students' needs with respect to the library? And how do Native American undergraduate students perceive the library?

## Methodology

Interviews were conducted with Native American undergraduate students in the fall of 2018. The interview method was chosen for its capacity to draw out participants' stories, allowing students to speak for themselves and providing person-to-person interaction.<sup>34</sup> The study was approved through the University Institutional Review Board with exempt status. Prior to commencing the study, the interview questions were tested with two Native American graduate students, resulting in minor changes. In the end, 16 interview questions focused on students' library experiences, needs, and perceptions, including library services, space, and culture (see appendix A). Two interview questions probed students' experiences and perceptions of the campus as a whole to better understand how their library experiences fit within the larger institutional context and how well the library is meeting their needs. One question that addressed library services was structured as a card sort activity. Participants were given 13 cards with different library services printed on them and invited to sort the cards into the following categories: very important, somewhat important, not important, and does not apply to me.

Participants consisted of seven self-identifying Native American undergraduates. They came from a variety of majors, including music, political science, accounting, engineering, community health sciences, and art. All students were upper-division undergraduates and most were nontraditional, including six commuter students, five transfer students, two student parents, and two students with full-time jobs. Most students were members of local tribes; however, to protect the participants' identity, tribal affiliation is not included in this article.

At the time of the study, 124 AI/AN undergraduate students were enrolled at the university. Participants were recruited through flyers posted around campus, communications with the Native American Student Organization, and word of mouth. Recruiting participants proved difficult, and after three months of effort it was determined that seven participants was sufficient for the qualitative study.<sup>35</sup> Recruitment information directed prospective participants to a short screening questionnaire. In addition to collecting student contact information, the screening questionnaire ensured a purposive sample of Native American undergraduates who have some experience using the library. A limitation of this study is that participants self-selected, and students with negative feelings toward the library may not have participated. Also, by recruiting students through the Native American Student Organization, study participants may have been more engaged on campus than their Native peers.

Interviews were scheduled according to student availability and took place in the library group study rooms. The group study rooms were used due to their privacy and ease of booking. Interviews were digitally recorded. As a thank-you for their participation, participants received a \$20 gift card, which was deemed a suitable compensation for their time without being coercive.

Transcripts were generated using Temi, a secure, automated transcription service, and cleaned up by the researcher.<sup>36</sup> NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, was used to code the transcripts.<sup>37</sup> The researcher developed a codebook through an iterative process that involved inductively applying descriptive codes to all transcripts before identifying and describing a defined set of codes, including 16 codes and 13 subcodes (see appendix B). While most codes were developed inductively, the definition of one code, TribalPerspectives, was informed by the theoretical frame of TribalCrit to accurately describe issues facing Native students such as colonization and assimilation.<sup>38</sup> The final coded transcripts were subsequently analyzed for emerging themes. To ensure validity, a member check was conducted in which summary results were shared with each participant.<sup>39</sup> Participants were given their identifying student number and invited to provide corrections, clarifications, and feedback.

## Findings

Students' experiences of the academic library in this study were shaped by their wider experiences as Native students on a predominantly White campus, which impacted their sense of belonging. Additionally, students' library use was often constrained by their nontraditional backgrounds, which presented competing responsibilities as well as limited time and financial resources. Nevertheless, students valued core library services such as access to technology and focused study space. While students primarily relied on the library for their functional academic needs, Native students also perceived cultural value in the special collections and archives. Such appreciation for culturally relevant collections extended to the library's exhibits and displays, which students frequently saw as increasing the visibility of Native Americans on campus. The following themes emerged from student interviews and are described using the students' own words to elucidate Native students' library experiences, needs, and perceptions at UNR.

### *Native students' identity impacts their sense of belonging on campus and in the library.*

All students in this study discussed belonging on campus, and many felt a sense of belonging in spaces where their identity—their student or Native identity—was reflected. Student 4 said, "We're all students here so I'm not really quite sure what would differentiate a Native American student's needs versus just any other ethnicity or group? I guess I don't understand... from the library's perspective." Student 3 felt "very comfortable" in the library, saying, "I guess when you're here you kind of feel like you can relate to people... it's people trying to learn." Student 1 felt, "The whole campus is welcoming... the students make it welcome." In spaces where their student identity was most prominent, these students felt comfortable.

For some<sup>40</sup> students, however, campus did not feel welcoming to Native Americans. A couple students distinguished between "White space" and "Native space." Student 2 said, "It's not very welcome anywhere... you're in a White space." Students described community demographics as well as colonization when discussing the campus' Whiteness. Some students emphasized the small size of the Native American student community on campus, which made it hard for them to connect with other Native students. Student 5 said, "Native students are already such a low population on campus." Student 6 echoed this, saying, "I... hardly ever see any Native people because, the few Native people that I do know here... our schedules are all different." These students described being isolated from their Native peers.

Some students spoke directly of colonization when describing their experiences on campus. A couple students brought up a local boarding school for Native Americans that was in operation as recently as 1980.<sup>41</sup> As Student 5 stated, “My grandparents... went to the boarding school.” These students emphasized the lasting effects of forced assimilation on their communities. Student 2 described “walking in two different worlds,” explaining, “It’s not like a normal student. Normal students can come here and be like, ‘Oh, yeah, I’m part of the U.S. government and that’s it,’ and you don’t have to deal with the trauma, you don’t have to deal with the rebuilding of nations.” For these students, the weight of colonization was something they carried with them as they pursued their educations.

Many students mentioned the importance of campus supports for Native American students, specifically the Center for Diversity & Inclusion (The Center). These students found a sense of belonging at The Center that was missing elsewhere on campus. Student 2 said, “It feels like home, a little bit. A little taste of home.” Student 3 said, “Once I kinda started hanging around with people I could relate to at The Center... something changed inside me.” While The Center was a supportive space for these students, Student 5 felt it wasn’t enough: “We have The Center but it’s really not a Native space and there’s other campuses where... they have a whole hall or somewhere for Native students to hang out.”

### ***Native students can face additional challenges due to their nontraditional backgrounds.***

Six of the seven students interviewed were nontraditional students. They were transfer students and commuter students, students who worked full-time and students who had young children. Many described challenges associated with being a nontraditional student on a traditional university campus. The transfer students described a difficult transition to the university. Some struggled to “get back in that mindset” after taking time off from school. Most students lived off-campus and some had long commutes. Student 7 said, “I commute every day and [that] takes up most of my time.” A couple students also worked full-time jobs. Student 4 described working full-time and attending school: “I have a lot of stuff to do and not a lot of time because, you know, I’m at work from 7:30 to 4:00 and then in class, so it leaves me a couple hours every night to try to get my studying done.” Student 6, reflecting on a particularly trying period, said, “It was just really hard to do school and work full-time.” These students were fitting academics into their full schedules as best they could.

Two students also had young children and found campus largely unsupportive of student-parents. Student 5 said, “There’s nothing on campus for parents.” They encountered difficulties planning their schedules around childcare dropoff and pickup, feeling that bringing their children to campus was unwelcome. Student 5 said, “A lot of other students don’t have kids, so they don’t understand that some days I got to bring my kids with me to the library.” Student 6 wanted “a place where I could take [my son] without people looking at me like, *oh my gosh*.” They thought the library should provide “a family room... a place where I could bring my son and let him play and stuff without being disruptive to other people.” Student 6 also underscored the need for a “nursing station,” describing the difficulty of finding a place to pump in the library—“towards the end of the hall... because I didn’t want to do it in the bathroom.” Such intersecting identities often complicated these Native students’ educational pursuits. As Student 5 said, “It’s just kind of hard being a commuter student, a parent student, and a broke student.”

***Native students use the library for quiet, focused study.***

All students described study space as important to them, with five out of seven describing it as very important. Most students expressed a need for quiet, focused study. The library provided the space and the atmosphere that these students preferred to “get things done.” As Student 1 said, “Libraries are where I like to think.” Student 3 wanted a place to “just dig in deep and study,” elaborating, “I’m not really a study person, but when I do have to study, I come [to the library].” Student 4 found it motivating to be surrounded by other people studying: “It’s completely quiet and that is amazing because... everyone’s just focused and so I’m able to study better.” For several students, the library’s designated quiet floor was their preferred study space, though others liked a variety of noise levels. Student 7 said, “I can’t study... when there’s a lot of noise, but also can’t study when it’s too quiet, so I need a good in-between. [The library] offers all of that.”

All students described a preferred study space, and most identified a study spot in the library. They used words such as “my little spot” to identify their study space and could often describe it in detail. Student 3 liked “the fifth floor, next to the windows, facing the outside.” Windows were an important feature to some students. These students avoided dark, confined spaces, which they described variously as “a box,” “the office,” or “a dark, stuffy... library.” Other features of students’ ideal study spots included “a comfy chair,” “multiple outlets,” “wifi,” “printing,” and “space.” Ample space was especially important for Student 4, who wanted “to spread out my books and have my laptop out and all my papers.”

Several students learned over time that they needed the kind of distraction-free study environment the library provided. As Student 6 said, “When I was younger I would try to study at home more, but now looking back that wasn’t probably the best because I would just get distracted.” Most students shared that they were easily distracted at home. When trying to study at home, they instead found themselves engaged in other activities, such as “cleaning,” “laundry,” “video games,” or “sleep.” While most students relied on the campus library for focused study, some also studied at the public library or, as Student 5 said, “Anywhere that there’s not gonna be anyone bothering me,” including “my car.” Students described other spaces on campus that were not ideal for studying. Student 6 said, “The few Native people that I do know... they go to The Center and I can’t study there because it’s just too loud.” These students were aware of what worked for them, and what worked was studying at the library.

***Native students rely on the library to access key resources.***

All students valued core library services, such as access to computers, databases, and printers. Among the seven students in this study, six identified computers along with printers, copiers, and scanners as very important to them, while five identified the library website and databases as very important. A few students described library computers as integral to their coursework. Student 7 expressed needing access to a library computer for “all the courses I’ve taken here,” adding, “I think it’s very important, especially for the ones who don’t have access to computers at home.” While a few students described using their own laptops, a couple students acknowledged that not all students have personal laptops. Student 3 said, “Coming from where I came from... [a] laptop is almost a privilege.” Student 4 echoed this comment, saying, “Native Americans, you know, a lot of people don’t usually have laptops.” For this reason, the library’s lendable technology was regarded as important by five of seven students.

Most students described relying heavily on the library's printers, copiers, and scanners for their coursework. However, some students were frustrated with the cost of printing. Furthermore, most students described experiencing financial hardship. As Student 1 said, "I mean, we're already paying so much for all of these things. Why nick us?... Why get us for something that we could use to eat?" Student 5 explained that the cost of printing at the library is "part of why I don't come [to the library]."

Most students felt that the library website and databases were important for their coursework. Student 7 said, "There's a lot of good articles on there that you can't really find on the [internet]." A few students appreciated having full-text access "right then" to online resources through the library website. Student 1 explained that, for this generation, "Everything wants to be online." Despite feeling that the library website and databases were important, a few students described needing "more direction" on how to use them. Student 3 wanted to know "what to do, where to click." Student 5 said, "You really have to know where to go in there because it's like you click on the wrong thing and... it's something different."

Although they acknowledged a need for more training on the library website and databases, five of the seven students ranked library instruction as only somewhat important in the card sort question. Two students felt that it was not important or that it did not apply to them. Only a few students recalled ever having a library instruction session and a couple students referred to their new student orientation as their only introduction to the library. Student 1 summarized the orientation experience as, "This is the library... and you can come in and get help." On the other hand, Student 7 described a library session in "one of my first classes" and said that "it helped a lot." A couple students had received library instruction in "upper division" and "actual research classes" and found these sessions helpful.

***Native students value archives and special collections, even if they've never used them.***

Even though most of the students interviewed had never used the special collections and university archives and many had only a vague idea of what they contained, all students nevertheless valued special collections and archives. Among the seven students in the study, six identified these unique collections as very important to them, with one student identifying them as somewhat important. Many students ascribed cultural importance to special collections and archives. Student 4 had "never utilized it, but I think it's important," explaining, "From a Native American perspective... I didn't know that [our tribe is] here so I've been meaning to get up [to the archives] and see." Student 1 said, "The history of this school ties in with a lot of people and... when we did our Powwow the archives had pictures of us having the Powwow here so many years ago." Student 2 commented that the special collections and archives "is pretty cool... they opened up the special collections for the Native American stuff and there's just so much."

While most students felt that special collections and archives were important, many also wanted to know more about them. Student 1 said, "I don't know where it's at and I don't know how to get there," while Student 7 said, "We don't even know what that is... Is it something where students could just walk in?" It was unclear to these students what these collections were and how to access them. Student 3 urged the special collections and archives to "[make] it easier to access, in a way, especially for Native students because... I came in here not knowing much of my history or anything."



### *Native students value visible representations of Native Americans in the library.*

Most students were concerned about representation of Native Americans on campus, including in the library. For many, the lack of “awareness of the local tribes” was troubling. As Student 5 said, “A lot of Natives on campus feel like we’re overlooked in the fact that this is our Native land... many of us have grown up here and it’s where our families are from and it’s not acknowledged on campus.” They felt “left out” or treated as a “topic of the day.” When the library did display Native American people and culture, students noticed and often appreciated the visibility.

Most students noted the permanent and rotating exhibits from the library’s special collections and archives, particularly exhibits with a “Native theme.” A couple students highlighted the importance of exhibits that reflect “Natives in the community” and “the people of this area.” Student 3 said, “Seeing your own stuff... you can relate” and described “a sense of pride” about such exhibits. On the other hand, Student 6 felt that some of the representations of Native Americans in the library were problematic. “I don’t like that picture,” the student said, commenting on a prominent photograph depicting a Native American woman in “White clothes” that was displayed as part of a special exhibit, adding, “Why wouldn’t they put a picture of her in Native clothing?” The lack of context left some students feeling unsettled. Student 7 wanted to know “why the library chose to post those” images. While students appreciated library exhibits featuring Native Americans, most wanted “more information” or “story” to help them and others make meaning of the exhibits.

Just as students noticed exhibits featuring Native Americans, they also noticed the absence of Native Americans in temporary book displays. A few students observed that the library “didn’t do anything for Native American Heritage Month.” For this month especially, Student 1 wanted to see a display of “all books Native.” They wanted to “take a break and read something... written by Native people.” A couple students wanted to see “more diversified” displays with “more Native people.” “They’re never anybody that looks like me,” Student 6 said. The library’s failure to include Native Americans in routine book displays left some Native students feeling excluded.

## **Discussion**

Findings from this study provide insight into Native American undergraduate students’ library experiences, needs, and perceptions at one university. The results have local implications for professional practice, but they may nevertheless be informative for academic librarians and library staff working with Native American students at other institutions.

## ***Experiences***

Native students in this study experienced the library in part through their Native identity. While not all students spoke explicitly of colonization, consideration of Native students’ experiences benefits from reflecting on the tenets of TribalCrit, which recognizes that “colonization is endemic to society” and therefore central to Native American experiences.<sup>42</sup> It further states that government policies toward Native Americans are “rooted in” White supremacy and that assimilation is an “inevitable” —and once explicit—outcome of formal education in the United States.<sup>43</sup> Native students are therefore navigating a space that is colonized and their experience of campus as a “White space” can extend to the library.

Native students' nontraditional student backgrounds also shaped their campus and library experiences. Most Native students in this study were transfer students, student parents, commuter students, or students with full-time jobs. These identities impacted whether and how Native students used the campus library, a finding that is supported by research showing a shifting hierarchy of students' social identities in different campus spaces.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, as transfer students, many Native students did not receive a library instruction session in the traditional first-year composition course, which left them to learn about the library either through transfer student orientation or upper division classes, if at all.

### *Needs*

Native students in this study described their needs primarily as students, a finding that echoes previous research.<sup>45</sup> Having a quiet space for focused study was particularly important, and many students felt that the campus library was the best place for that. Students also relied on the library to access key resources such as printers, computers, and databases. This reinforces the established importance of functional library resources to Indigenous students.<sup>46</sup> Notably, while they valued the library's information resources and recognized a need for further training in library research, these Native students did not view library instruction as especially important to them.

### *Perceptions*

Recognition of Native American culture through library exhibits, displays, and collections was important to Native students in this study. Other research has shown that students' perceived sense of belonging can be negatively impacted when their culture is not validated on campus.<sup>47</sup> Visible representations of Native Americans in library exhibits and displays and, in turn, in the library's collections are therefore important and can provide positive cultural recognition.<sup>48</sup> Significantly, *how* Native Americans were represented was just as important to students in this study as *whether* they were represented. Native students also perceived cultural value in the archives and special collections. This was true even if they had no experience with archives and special collections. While some research has explored Native students' perceptions of special collections and Indigenous scholars' reliance on archives, this study uncovers the potential significance of such cultural collections to Native undergraduate students.<sup>49</sup>

### *Implications*

#### Professional Practice

The results of this study have implications for academic libraries. Librarians and library staff should be aware that students' identities affect their experience of campus and the library. For instance, Native students are often dealing with colonization in ways that impact their library experiences. Library professionals should also consider how well their services and spaces meet the needs of nontraditional students. Outreach to and support for these groups will benefit Native students as well. Librarians and library staff should not underestimate the importance of fundamental library services, including access to library databases, computers, printers, and both individual and group study space. Library professionals should pay particular attention to visible representations of Native Americans and provide appropriate, inclusive collections and contextualized exhibits and displays. Finally, librarians and library staff should partner with their archives and special collections departments to promote rel-

evant cultural collections to Native students in accordance with professional best practices for cultural materials.<sup>50</sup>

### Local Practice

At the UNR Libraries, findings from this study have inspired, renewed, and reinforced efforts to serve Native American students. Study findings were presented to relevant library working groups, including the Outreach Committee, the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Committee, and Special Collections & University Archives. Subsequently, the Outreach Committee curated a display of Native and Indigenous books for Native American Heritage Month. The EDI Committee drafted a land acknowledgment statement for the library. The library administration revisited providing a lactation room in the library and plans to develop a suitable space are underway. Special Collections & University Archives has continued work to align itself with the Society of American Archivists' Protocols for Native American Archival Materials, identifying tribal affiliations and culturally sensitive materials in the entirety of their collections.

### *Further Research*

These findings suggest areas for further research. The results of this study indicate a limited role of library instruction in Native students' library experiences. Future studies could explore the information literacy needs of Native students. The perceived value of archives and special collections for Native students calls for further investigation as well, including into the use of culturally relevant materials for class assignments. Finally, while there is a growing body of research into nontraditional students' library experiences, the results of this study suggest that the topic warrants further exploration, perhaps especially with regard to transfer students and student parents.

### **Conclusion**

Based upon the findings of this qualitative study, Native American undergraduate students' library experiences, perceptions, and needs are shaped by their identities as students, as Native Americans, and, in many cases, as nontraditional students. Academic libraries provide essential support to Native students through core services. However, by acknowledging the multidimensional nature of students' identities, libraries can begin to improve experiences for Native American students at their institutions. Attention to cultural displays and collections will resonate with many Native students, while providing core library services such as access to technology and study space will support their fundamental academic needs. Finally, by recognizing many Native students' nontraditional experiences, libraries can focus on outreach to these students.

## APPENDIX A. Semistructured Interview Guide

### Opening

Thank you for being here today. To begin, I'd like to get to know you a bit.

1. Tell me a little about yourself.

*Follow-up:* Where are you from? How did you end up coming to University of Nevada, Reno? What's your major? What do you want to do after you graduate?

### Library Experiences & Perceptions

*Thank you for sharing. Let's talk now about libraries.*

1. Tell me about your experience using libraries. It could be any library, at any time of life.
2. Tell me about the students who use the main campus library, or who you *think* use the library.

*Follow-up:* What are they like? How would you describe them?

3. Think back to the last time you used the library. Describe what happened.

*Follow-up:* Where did you go? What time of day was it? What did you do? Who did you talk to? How long did you stay? Did you accomplish what you set out to accomplish?

4. Imagine you are talking to a prospective student who is touring the campus. What would you tell the student about the main campus library?

*Follow-up:* Would your response be different if the prospective student were also Native? How?

### Needs & Services

*Thank you for your responses. Let's talk now about library services.*

1. Do you use the library for working on class assignments? If yes, can you tell me what you use it for? If no, why not?

*In the next question, I'm going to give you different cards to sort. These cards have different library services written on them. Sort the cards into different piles based on the importance of each service to you for helping you succeed in your classes. As you sort them, talk aloud about what you're thinking.*

2. Categories: very important, somewhat important, not important, and does not apply to me.

Services:

- Printers/copiers/scanners
- Study space (for example, tables, study desks)
- Group study rooms
- Computers
- Specialized software (for example, Photoshop, iMovie, R)
- Library website/databases
- Physical collections (for example, books, magazines, DVDs)
- Lendable technology (for example, laptops, cameras)
- Course reserves (for example, course readings held at the library services desk for your class)
- Drop-in research help
- One-on-one consultation with a subject librarian
- Library instruction (for example, class visit to the library or librarian visit to your class)

- Special Collections & University Archives  
[Photograph results of card sort.]
3. Tell me more about how you use the services that are important to you (for example, services in the *very* and *somewhat important* categories).  
*Follow-up:* Is there anything *not* on these cards that is important to you?
  4. Think back to a recent research assignment you've had—it could be a paper, a presentation, or some other assignment that required you to do research. Walk me step-by-step through your process for completing the assignment.
  5. What was the biggest challenge you encountered?  
*Follow-up:* Did you ask anyone for help? If yes, who? If no, why not?

### Space & Culture

*Thank you for your responses. We're now at the last section of the interview. Let's talk now about how the library could be better.*

1. What advice would you give to the main campus library to make it better at supporting your needs?
2. What is your favorite place to study? Why?  
*Follow-up:* What do you like about studying there?
3. What kinds of spaces on campus feel most welcoming to you?  
*Follow-up:* What makes them welcoming?
4. What advice would you give to the library to make it a more comfortable or welcoming place for you and other Native students?
5. Finally, what word comes to mind when you think of the main campus library?

### Closing

*Thank you very much for your responses.*

1. Is there anything else you'd like to share?

## APPENDIX B. Codebook

Code	Subcode	Description
Belonging		Use this code for discussions of belonging on campus. This can include fitting in, transitioning to school, homesickness, diversity, and feelings (e.g., welcomed or judged).
Community Engagement		Use this code for discussions of engagement with the Native American community. This can include “giving back” as well as participating in cultural events and organizations.
Coursework		Use this code for discussions of student coursework. This can include studying, accessing course materials, and completing assignments. Examples of assignments may include research and writing.
FinancialBurden		Use this code for discussions of students’ financial hardship. This can include necessary costs such as parking, printing, and food as well as access to resources for school, such as a laptop or financial aid.
FocusedStudy		Use this code for discussions of students’ focused study. This can include the need for quiet, uninterrupted concentration and freedom from distractions. For discussions of students’ preferred study environment, use the code StudySpot. For discussions of student work being done, use the code Coursework.
IndigenousStudies		Use this code for discussions of teaching, learning, and research about Indigenous peoples. This can include Indigenous library collections and research resources as well as courses of study.
LibraryExhibits		Use this code for discussions of library exhibits and displays. This can include temporary book displays and themed exhibits as well as permanent installations.
LibraryExperiences		Use this code for discussions of students’ library experiences. This can include previous library use, use of public libraries, or campus branch libraries. This can also include affective dimensions of library experience, such as positive or negative service experiences.
LibraryServices		Use this code for discussions of library resources. This can include support services, hours, outreach, and other amenities such as food and coffee.
<i>use subcode only:</i>	Computers	Use this code for discussions of computer needs and use. This can include library computers, personal computers, or other public computers.
<i>use subcode only:</i>	Consultation	Use this code for discussions of one-on-one consultations with subject librarians. This does not include drop-in research help.

<i>use subcode only:</i>	CourseReserves	Use this code for discussions of library course reserves. This can include any print or electronic course materials that are held for a class at the library.
<i>use subcode only:</i>	DropInHelp	Use this code for discussions of drop-in research help. This can include walk-ups to the research help desk or chat. This does not include one-on-one consultations with a subject librarian.
<i>use subcode only:</i>	GroupStudy	Use this code for discussions of library group study spaces. This can include group study rooms or whiteboard nooks. This does not include group projects more generally, which fall under the code Coursework.
<i>use subcode only:</i>	LendableTechnology	Use this code for discussions of lendable technology through the library. This includes laptops, cameras, wifi hotspots, etc.
<i>use subcode only:</i>	LibraryDatabases	Use this code for discussions of the library's electronic resources. This can include the library website and catalog as well as databases.
<i>use subcode only:</i>	LibraryInstruction	Use this code for discussions of library instruction. This can include instances when a class comes to the library to visit a librarian as well as when a librarian visits a class.
<i>use subcode only:</i>	PhysicalCollections	Use this code for discussions of the library's physical collections. This can include books, DVDs, magazines, etc. This does not include lendable technology or special collections.
<i>use subcode only:</i>	Printers	Use this code for discussions of printers, copiers, and scanners. This can include library printers as well as other student printers on campus.
<i>use subcode only:</i>	SpecialCollections	Use this code for discussions of special collections and university archives. This can include use of special collections and archives as well as perceptions of special collection and archives.
<i>use subcode only:</i>	SpecialSoftware	Use this code for discussions of specialized software. This can include software in library labs such as SPSS, R, iMovie, etc.
<i>use subcode only:</i>	StudySpace	Use this code for discussions of library study space. This can include spaces in the library for personal study, such as desks, carrels, rooms, and floors. For discussion of an individual's preferred or habitual study environment, use the code StudySpot.
NativeStudents		Use this code for discussions of Native American students. This can include Native American students' needs or experiences. This does not include existing supports for Native American students.
NativeSupport		Use this code for discussions of formal and informal support for Native American students on campus. This can include Native faculty, retention support, as well as The Center for Diversity and Inclusion.

NonTraditional		Use this code for discussions of nontraditional students. This can include transfer students, student parents, and working students.
PostGraduation		Use this code for discussions of students' postgraduation goals and plans. This can include career and graduate school plans.
StudySpot		Use this code for discussions of students' preferred study spot. This can include environmental descriptors.
TribalPerspectives		Use this code for discussions of tribal issues. This can include colonization, sovereignty, nation building, political/racial identity, and assimilation (e.g., boarding schools). This does not include more general discussions of Native American students, Indigenous studies, Native American community engagement, etc.
Visibility		Use this code for discussions of visibility of Native Americans on campus. This can include awareness and representations of Native Americans as well as narratives and counternarratives. Within the library, this can include discussion of Native-themed exhibits and displays (which also use the code LibraryExhibits).

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## Notes

1. The term "Native American" is used throughout this article to refer to those connected to the pre-colonial inhabitants of what is now the continental United States. The term "Indigenous" in this article refers inclusively to Native Americans as well as to those with ties to the pre-colonial inhabitants of other lands, such as the First Nations peoples of Canada and the Aboriginal peoples of Australia. The term American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) is used only when referring to official demographic information.

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