

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Young Native Fiddlers started with a question, “Where are the Native children?” I was attending public events at which amateur musicians performed and as I watched the children play their music, I was struck by the oddness of the picture. These children were predominately white. I did not see any children who appeared to be Alaska Native. The school in which I taught third grade was ethnically diverse with an Alaska Native representation at that time of 28%. About a third of my class was Native. The faces of the children I saw everyday looked quite different from the children I was watching represent children’s music in Fairbanks. As I explain in Chapter 2, I was concerned that Native youth were not involved in music, particularly when I learned that Athabascan fiddling has been a tradition in the Alaskan Interior for over 150 years. When one studies the positive impact of music on youth, and even more significantly, the connection to culture for these children, it is clear that Alaska Native children should be included.

Research Questions

Initially, my questions focused on inclusion. I was interested in the possibility of involvement in music playing a part in the success of Alaska Native young people. The literature on children’s involvement in the arts and music looked promising in terms of connecting music skills and performance to success. This led to questions about resilience and in time, the culture of these children brought me to Athabascan fiddling. My research question became, *“What impact does a culturally-based music program have on the cultural well-being of Alaska Native youth?”* Within this question, I identified challenges to be explored.

- Initiate a teacher action research project to explore the possibility of musical skills having an impact on Alaska Native youth. Young Native Fiddlers was born.
- (Later) Initiate a participatory action research project to develop a culturally-based program of music instruction for Alaska Native children to be defined by the parent leadership team. Young Native Fiddlers evolved.
- Determine how we might nurture cultural well-being for these Alaska Native children.
- Explore the meaning of Athabascan fiddling for the families involved in this project as well as the community.

I was also interested in knowing if a program such as this might have an impact in the larger circle of the community so my second question became, *“What impact does a culturally-based music program have on the community of the participants?”* This study focuses on the Alaska Native youth and community within the framework of these two questions.

Research Design

I chose a qualitative approach to this research project as it best suited the open-ended questions and issues involved. Joseph Maxwell lists particular goals of a qualitative research design that are applicable to this project (Maxwell, 2005, pp. 22-23). One is having an inductive approach, meaning that one starts by gathering information about individual experiences or statements of feelings of those involved in the project, in this case the participants and community members, then developing more abstract conceptual categories in order to synthesize the data and identify patterns. Another is to understand the meaning of experiences for the participants, that is, their perspectives or realities, otherwise known as worldview. These

experiences or actions occur in a particular context, the Alaska Native community, which is fundamental to this study. A qualitative research paradigm allows flexibility so that new information and relationships that might impact the participants or the project can be included whenever they appear. And as a participatory research project, it is all about process. The cycle of plan, act, observe, and reflect is integral to this project and occurs throughout.

I chose to design this research as a case study because a case study can be used to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and most significantly, the meaning for those involved (Merriam, 1998) which was my goal. A case study could best lead to understanding the impact of a culturally-based youth music program upon the participants and the community. Characteristics of a case study are “thick description”, “experiential understanding” and “multiple realities” (Stake, 1995, p. 43), all of which are a part of this unique case study on Young Native Fiddlers.

Young Native Fiddlers was originally started as a teacher action research project, until a critical event signaled that greater involvement of members of this Young Native Fiddlers (YNF) community was needed. Young Native Fiddlers developed into a participatory action research (PAR) project when parents, grandparents, and musicians joined the leadership. Chapter Two will include a discussion of PAR as a research method: its evolution in this project, the inclusion of participants, and their role in designing a program for their children. This PAR project is distinctive from others in that it evolved into an Indigenous project: culture became central to it as the parent leadership team took the project and made it theirs.

Participatory action research has been used in many parts of the world as a tool of empowerment, typically at local levels, as is the case with this project. The essential principle

about research in an Indigenous community is that an ethical commitment is required.

Research must benefit the community, not harm or ignore its members (Hoare, Levy, & Robinson, 1993; Wilson, 2008). It is also the community members who take an active part in the research as PAR relies on their experience. “Research is not just something that’s out there: it’s something that you’re building for the community” (Wilson, 2001, p. 179).

Respect, reciprocity, and relationality must guide Indigenous research (Wilson, 2008). Respect means valuing the culture. It means really listening to each other, acknowledging other ways of knowing, and building a respectful relationship. A respectful relationship empowers people to define and address the issues that affect their lives. Information is shared in a reciprocal manner, constructing knowledge together. Considering relationality means that a researcher isn’t acting alone. Everything done has an effect on everything else because of the interdependent nature of life. The impact ripples outward. Evelyn Steinhauer wrote (as quoted in Wilson, 2008, p. 56), “Knowledge itself is held in the relationships and connections formed with the environment that surrounds us.”

I include here a list of principles that Shawn Wilson (2007, p. 194) suggests must guide research and any resulting documents or actions as it seemed to summarize much of what was written on an Indigenous research paradigm (Davis & Reid, 1999; Graveline, 1998; Kovach, 2005; Steinhauer, 2002). I found this to be a useful guide in this PAR project.

- Respect all forms of life as being related and interconnected.
- Conduct all actions and interactions in a spirit of kindness, honesty and compassion.

- The reason for doing the research must be one that brings benefits to the Indigenous community.
- The foundation of the research question must lie within the reality of the Indigenous experience.
- Any theories developed or proposed must be grounded in an Indigenous epistemology and supported by the elders and the community that live out this particular epistemology.
- The methods used will be process-oriented, and the researcher will be recognized and be cognizant of his or her role as one part of the group in process.
- It will be recognized that transformation within every living entity participating in the research will be one of the outcomes of every project.
- It will be recognized that the researcher must assume a certain responsibility for the transformations and outcomes of the research project(s) which he or she brings into a community.
- It is advisable that a researcher works as a part of a team of Indigenous scholars/thinkers with the guidance of elder(s) or knowledge-keepers.
- It is recognized that the integrity of any Indigenous people or community could never be undermined by Indigenous research because such research is grounded in that integrity.

- It is recognized that the languages and cultures of Indigenous peoples are living processes and that research and the discovery of knowledge is an ongoing function for the thinkers and scholars of every Indigenous group.

While those involved with this project share an Indigenous heritage, representing Athabaskan, Inupiaq, Yup'ik and American Indian ethnicities, I do not. I am an Irish-American from Seattle, Washington. I have lived in Fairbanks, Alaska for thirty years working primarily as a teacher with the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District in the areas of special education, primary education and as a literacy specialist. Although I taught and worked with Alaska Native children and their families, I had little involvement in the Native community. As I describe in Chapter 2, I started this music project fourteen years ago with little knowledge of any connection to culture. As the project developed and became more culturally focused, I had to learn what a cultural focus meant. I had many good teachers whose voices you will hear.

Validity

A principle task for research is that its findings are valid. However, the definition of valid depends on one's theoretical stance. For example, quantitatively oriented research, which is grounded in a positivist framework, is based on cause-effect phenomena, which is approached from an objectivist, outsider viewpoint. In contrast, qualitative research, as described earlier, espouses differing theoretical views, seeking knowledge by other means. The research approach is determined by its purposes, questions, and issues (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Reason and Bradbury describe research in an action research paradigm, via Jurgen Habermas, as seeking knowledge resulting from an "emancipatory process, one which emerges as people strive towards conscious and reflexive emancipation, speaking, reasoning, and coordinating

action together, unconstrained by coercion” (2001a, p. 447). Criteria for quality must be also be appropriate to the theoretical stance and its methodology, in this case, participatory action research.

The Notion of Quality in Action Research

Numerous researchers have developed criteria to judge the quality of action research (Dillon, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Stake, 1995). I have chosen to describe validity using the criteria set forth by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury as it best matches a participatory action research paradigm. Reason and Bradbury (2001a) list three areas in which one should look for quality: a) quality through conceptual – theoretical integrity, b) quality through extending our ways of knowing, and c) quality through methodological appropriateness. In participatory action research, a primary criterion for quality is the perspective, interests and concerns of the local participants, not those of an outside researcher. These direct the practical and theoretical outcomes of the research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001b). This participatory worldview is about a particular way of seeing the world. This is similar to an Indigenous worldview, also known as a relational worldview (See Chapter 4).

This participatory worldview, according to Reason and Bradbury, leads to five kinds of questions in terms of validity and quality of an action research project, the first being quality as relational praxis. As action research is built on a participative way of seeing the world, it is about relationships. It is about the quality of the interactions and about feeling free to be fully involved (Reason & Bradbury, 2001a, 2001b). Participants should feel empowerment as a result of being involved, and they should see themselves and their context in new ways as a result of their participation (Reason & Bradbury, 2001a).

The second criterion concerns a reflexive-practical outcome. Two questions frame this criterion. Has there been an advancement of both understanding and development through the action research cycle? Are participants able to act on what they have learned?

The third criterion refers to plural ways of knowing. Do the participants bring their own ways of knowing, based on their own experience to the research? What does theory contribute? Are members of the project transformed?

The fourth criterion examines the meaning of the work. Is the work significant? Does it make a difference for the participants (e.g. members of Young Native Fiddlers)? Does it make a difference for the community?

The fifth criterion is the question of whether the work is emergent, evolutionary and sustainable. Does the project have a good likelihood of enduring into the future? Is there a “living interest in the work” (Reason & Bradbury, 2001a, p. 449).

Table 1: Validity Concerns and Questions

Validity Concerns	Questions to Ask
Relationships	Are values of democracy and respect present?
Reflexive – practical outcome	Are persons acting on what they learned?
Plural ways of knowing	
Conceptual - theoretical	Is the theory reasonable and practical?
Extending ways of knowing	Are persons transformed?
Methodological appropriateness	Do methods match a participation worldview?
Significance	Does it make a difference for those involved?
Emergent and enduring consequence	Can it be sustained?

As a summary, (see table 1), I offer a list of concerns and questions about validity to be used as a guide based on the work of Reason and Bradbury (2001a). They mention that no action research project can deal with all issues equally but it certainly is the case that all issues listed above are of great importance to this project. It is about the benefit to youth, the participants and the community. That is what matters.

Researcher Bias

Bias can be thought about in two ways in this project. One is discussed in terms of a contribution a researcher makes to a PAR project. Judi Marshall writes, “It’s my translation, what I have found and interpreted from the data...it really is what I can give as a researcher, it is my contribution” (1981, p. 399). Absolon and Willet add that neutrality and objectivity don’t exist in qualitative research because the research is conducted and observed through the lenses various people with their own experiences (2005). I transcribed the interviews, explored the data and identified themes that emerged from the participants’ experiences.

Another kind of bias I attempted to keep in mind as I organized the data is that even though they shared their truths with me, another person’s perspective is largely unknown to me. This is particularly true for a member of a differing culture. As a member of a colonizing culture it was critical to take the needed time to form a trusting partnership. Having worked together for years, (at least four for most of those participating) and having been to each other’s houses, parties and places of work, speaks to our developing relationships. We felt comfortable disagreeing with each other as well as teasing and complimenting each other. It became clear that while we started out with many differences that we grew to understand and be comfortable with, we were always united in our goal of success for these children. Our

developing friendships might cause some readers to be concerned about bias. However, the action research cycle required that we come to consensus on what is really happening, its meaning and what we might do about it. The strength of this study lies in its authenticity and transparency as will be illustrated in the following chapters. Following Judi Marshall's lead, I offer that this dissertation is my contribution. Other members of the team reflecting their own perspectives would surely write it differently.

As a case study, this project contributes to research on cultural resilience. Cultural resilience is "the way that the individual's cultural background, supports, values and environmental experience help facilitate the process of overcoming adversity" (Clauss-Ehlers, 2004, p. 28). This project illustrates how children develop cultural resilience through participation in their cultural music, Athabascan fiddling, and become empowered and connected to their cultural community. It illustrates how these young people share their skills and strengths with their cultural community thus strengthening the community. This case study also shows how a group of community members developed a program that is meaningful to their cultural community, one that celebrates children, integrating and strengthening both individual and community resilience. It would be wonderful to see this program serve as a model for projects in other Alaskan locations although it would appear quite different, reflecting the context of a different community.

Literature Review

Biklin and Casella describe a literature review as "a description of a conversation that already exists in relation to your project" (Biklin & Casella, 2007, p. 76). In this dissertation, I am choosing to have those conversations where they apply, that is, throughout this paper as well as

focusing on the literature related to music in a “stand alone” chapter. This approach matches the evolving PAR framework of this paper. “Literature references should reflect the emergent process and thesis that comes from conducting action research. Literature should be woven through the developing arguments and interpretations” (Jacobs, 2008, p. 232). The literature can inform one working through the stages of the PAR cycle, informing planning, acting, reflecting or evaluating so it is appropriate that it be included where it is helpful for understanding a framework or a planned action. It is also important to consider that a particular worldview and various experiences inform this project, so the literature, as an additional form of knowledge, should do so also.

I have designated Chapter 3 as a literature review chapter as this chapter is not part of the PAR process but rather serves as a framework for understanding Athabascan music and its significance to this study.

Introduction to Remaining Chapters

My focus in Chapter 2 is on methodology. I will trace the history of this project from its inception as a teacher action research project, to its development as a community run, culturally-based, participatory action research project. Included will be an in-depth discussion of participatory action research, focusing in particular on the action research cycle. Arts and learning, as well as culture and music will also be discussed.

In Chapter 3, I study Athabascan fiddling, something little known to me when I started this project but which turned out to be significant to community members. As fiddling is a highly regarded tradition in the Native communities of Interior Alaska, Young Native Fiddlers became a means by which the community might continue and strengthen this aspect of their culture. This

chapter reviews the literature and discusses the history of fiddling for Alaska Natives and its transmission and meaning as well as music as it relates to identity and resilience.

As this project seeks to define success for children in culturally relevant ways, discussing the significance of cultural resilience, Chapter 4 explores what is meant by that; what is success and how do Indigenous persons view it? I will discuss balance and harmony, the significance of connections, and how those connections lead to cultural resilience (success). I will focus on one student and his connections as they apply to resilience.

In Chapter 5, I share the words of the participants in this research project in first exploring answers to Question 1. Children, parents, grandparents, community musicians and elders discuss participation in Young Native Fiddlers and the impact that participation has had on them. Elements leading to individual and community resilience are revisited. I will then present information concerning Question 2 of this study, looking at the impact of young fiddlers and the leadership team upon the community, particularly in the areas of wellness and resilience.

Chapter 6 will conclude this paper. I will discuss this project as it relates to cultural resilience. As a framework, I will address the suggestions for further research recommended in “Resilience, an Evolving Concept: A Review of Literature Relevant to Aboriginal Research” by John Fleming and Robert K. Ledogar (2008, pp. 17-18). These suggestions include: 1) understanding what makes some Aboriginal youth respond positively to risk and adversity and others not; 2) providing empirical confirmation of the theory of resilient reintegration among Aboriginal youth; 3) the role of culture as a resource for resilience; 4) understanding how urban Native youth who don’t live in self-governed communities with strong cultural continuity, such

as a village (in Alaska) can become, or remain, resilient; and 5) greater involvement of aboriginal researchers in order to bring a non-linear world to resilience research. I will also discuss my own recommendations.

Chapter 2: Methodology - Participatory Action Research

Introduction

Young Native Fiddlers is a program of fiddle and guitar instruction for Alaska Native children in Fairbanks, Alaska. Ethnicities of the approximately forty children participating each year include Athabascan, Yup'ik, Inupiaq and American Indian. Funded by grants, community support, and fundraisers, Young Native Fiddlers offers individual, weekly violin or guitar lessons to children aged 5 – 18. This instruction is given at each child's school during a recess time or at an instructor's studio after school. Children also gather every Saturday to learn from Alaska Native instructors who teach them to play the fiddle and guitar music that is traditional in the Native community. The children are then able to participate in community cultural celebrations.

The development of Young Native Fiddlers transitioned over the course of the past fourteen years. It started as a simple teacher action research project concerned with inequity. Gradually, it evolved into a participatory action research project involving parents, grandparents, musicians, young fiddlers, elders, community members and myself. The project is well on its way toward creating new knowledge, embracing community involvement, empowering parents and children and effecting meaningful changes. In this chapter, I will share this growth process. Embedded are my own reflections in which I describe situations and concerns I had during this PAR process. They demonstrate the observation and reflection elements of the PAR cycle. I will discuss the development of the project as it transitioned into a participatory action research project, and continued as a strong, team-run, community project.

Pilot Study – Teacher Action Research

Action research and participatory action research are grounded in a qualitative research paradigm. Bogdan and Biklen (2003, p.4) define five features of qualitative research. The first is that it is naturalistic, meaning that research is done in its natural setting, such as in this case, at the school where I worked or in the Native community. Qualitative research is descriptive. Interview transcripts, field notes, photographs, videotapes, personal documents such as journal entries or reflections or any other sources that might contribute to understanding are collected and written into narratives. The third feature is that qualitative researchers value the process as well as the outcome. Learning happens as a result of process, the process being the ongoing participatory action research cycle of plan, act, observe, and reflect. Fourth, qualitative research is inductive. Information from many sources will be gathered and reflected upon in an effort to understand the impact of this program. And most importantly, it is about meaning. I want to know what meaning involvement in a culturally-based music program such as Young Native Fiddlers has for these children and their families. How do they feel about their involvement? What are their experiences and how do they interpret those experiences? What connections are they making?

Participatory action research is an action-oriented process, entered into by ordinary people who want to address common needs in their daily lives. It is a research activity with the goal being to generate knowledge (Park, 2001). Bradbury and Reason (2001) tell us that the mark of a good action research project is that those involved will become energized and empowered through being involved, viewing the research as their own as they begin to see themselves and their contexts in a new way. It differs from other forms of social science

research in three ways: it involves people in the research process, action and research are integrated, and the knowledge gained is practice-based (Park, 2001). St. Denis adds another difference; participatory action research espouses an emphasis and respect for human interaction (St. Denis, 1992). Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) describe participatory research as being critical, reflexive, aiming to transform both theory and practice, social, participatory, practical and collaborative, and emancipating. I will discuss these qualities of PAR and their application to this project. However, it is important to keep in mind, that in a participatory worldview of connections and relationality, these concepts are not isolated categories but rather work in partnership. For example, in discussing an event for the youth participants, the leadership team will reflect together, collaborating and participating, using their new knowledge in application to their community as they work through the PAR cycle. I will address these related concepts in a linear manner. I will start my discussion with the ongoing cycle of action and reflection which is at the heart of action research and will continue through this chapter pointing out examples of the components of this cycle in practice.

Action Research: A Cyclical Approach

The action research cycle is central to this project. Kurt Lewin described this process as a cyclical approach to research with the steps of this spiral being planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Although some researchers give different names to the steps of this process, it is in essence a systematic cycle of action and reflection with the key purpose being to produce practical knowledge that is beneficial to people as they live their daily lives (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) suggest using the relationships between these actions of plan, act, observe and reflect as a source of both improvement and knowledge. This is the

reflexive aspect. An action researcher decides upon a plan of action, carries out this plan, and then observes the effects. He reflects on this process and the outcomes and plans again. This reflexive element actually can be thought of as having its own cycle. David Tripp writes “reflexivity involves a kind of circularity in understanding in which the person trying to understand the so-called 'objective' phenomenal world they are investigating, examines the way in which their developing understanding changes them and their relation, not only to both the phenomenal world they are observing and their knowledge of it, but also to how they are observing and understanding the phenomenal world” (Tripp, 1998, p. 39). Paulo Freire named this process of self-awareness through collective self-inquiry and reflection *conscientization* (Reason, 1994). The action is having an impact if it changes the researchers, in this case, the leadership team, which gives the action meaning and validates the process. Reflections are the site of learning, enabling each loop of the spiral to build on the previous loop.

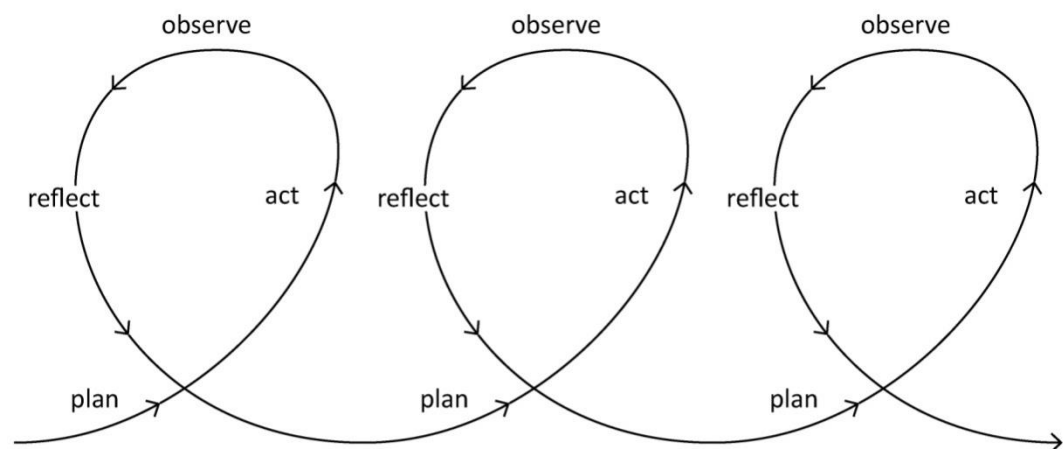


Figure 1: The Action Research Cycle

I reflected on what I was learning as I progressed through this cycle. In Vygotskian terms, according to Joan Wink and LeAnn Putney (2002), “understanding” means “to change” and this was certainly occurring, impacting how I continued through the cycle. I was not just learning about the perspectives of these children and their families but also learning about myself, which in turn created new understandings of child and parent perspectives.

An example of this, actually coming from a time much later in the project, was at a performance by the children held in the Native community soon after a performance in the general Fairbanks community which was particularly difficult. At this second performance at the tribal hall, I noticed myself, a non-Native, reacting to what I felt to be, a remarkably different feeling in the room. I sensed a feeling of love for, and pride in these children by members of the audience. The sounds produced on fiddles and guitars were far less important than who these children were as members of this community. These children’s membership in the Native community felt a good deal different from their membership in the general Fairbanks community. My changing understanding of ‘community’ as it applied to these children led me to reflect on the potential impact of this youth fiddling program on children and parents as a result of their connections to their community through music. This understanding opened me to notions of diversity and invited me to develop better observation skills so that I might learn more about an unfamiliar worldview.

Being Critical: Social Justice

As discussed in Chapter 1, Alaska Native children did not appear to be included in community music. Reflecting on this led to the thoughts of injustice and questions such as, “Why are the number of minority children involved in music in our town so few?”

Reflection – Early in the project - John Blacking writes that all men are musical (Blacking, 1973). I am convinced this is so. Yet, when I observe children performing music in town, I am struck by the fact that few Native children apparently have access to music making – music making, which is so fundamental to being human. Blacking (1973) asks about our Western society - why general musical abilities should be restricted to a chosen few in societies which are supposed to be culturally more advanced? Reflecting on this exclusionary practice, I see this situation as one to be challenged as I believe all children should be able to experience this musical part of themselves. I suspect that lack of opportunity and/or the finances to pay for the opportunity are the roadblocks. How might I change that for the Alaska Native children at my school? Perhaps I can find funding to do this. I need a plan.

This led to questions, “What is limiting the involvement of Alaska Native children in musical performance?” “Do I have the capability or the passion to act on this issue?” and “What will I do?” After mulling these issues for a short time, I ‘jumped into’ this project that became a study to increase the opportunities available to Alaska Native children. Reflection led to action.

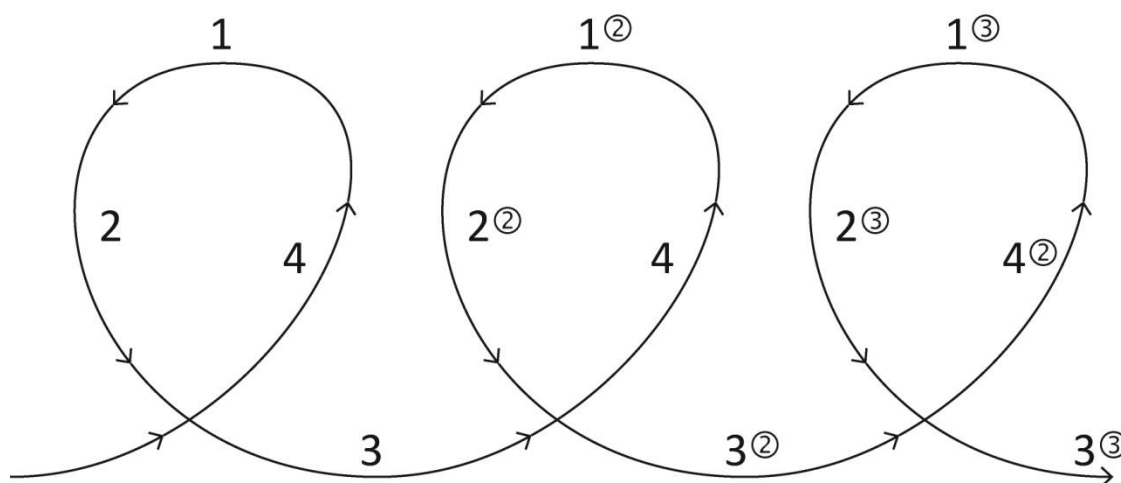


Figure 2: An Example of the Action Research Cycle From the Inception of This Project.

1. Observation – Scarcity of Alaska Native participants in children’s community music in Fairbanks
2. Reflection – “Why are the numbers of minority children involved in music in our town so few?” Why aren’t they more involved when music making is a ‘trait that emerges early and often in the lives of children and adults alike’ (Campbell, 1998, p. 5)”. “This is not acceptable; these children should have access to music making.” “What is limiting the involvement of Alaska Native children in musical performance?” “Do I have the capability or the passion to act on this issue?” and “What will I do?”
3. Plan – Perhaps I could provide a musical opportunity to Alaska Native (AN) students. I will try to get a violin instructor to come to school after dismissal to teach.
4. Act – I started exploring local sources to find an instructor. Calling around, I located an interested instructor.

1. (2) Observation – I could see a serious problem in getting this project started. We did not have any instruments and while I had arranged for donations to finance the lessons, there was no funding available to purchase violins at approximately \$150. apiece.

2. (2) Reflection – Was it going to be over before it started? The families of these young people did not have access to instruments and it was unlikely they would be able to purchase new ones. I wanted to provide the instruments as I did not want access to music being determined by family finances (or lack of). How was I going to find funding for instruments? I thought about different sources and possibilities.

3. (2) Plan – I decided that the best place to start was the Alaska Native Education program with the school district.

4. (2) Act – I prepared a request, presented it, and instruments were funded.

And on and on...

Action research is a process in which persons are empowered to challenge an unjust situation. For example they reflect on a situation they feel to be unacceptable in their daily lives, and plan an action to take in order to contest that situation. They act on that plan, reflect on the impact their actions had and what might be done next. They accept the risk of stepping out of their comfort zone, facing the unknown, overcoming their fear, effecting change, and learning more about themselves. One parent told me that with this project, she was doing things she didn't know she could do. This is an empowering process. A situation is examined in order to improve it, or as Fals Borda (1979) tells us, "Reality is investigated in order to transform it."

Theory and Action

Margaret Ledwith discusses the partnership of theory and action. She is referring to a unity, in a "symbiotic relation" of theory and action (Ledwith, 2007). Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) write that participatory action research transforms both theory and practice. As shown in Figure 2, knowledge production and action are integral to the process. Both theory and practice play an equal role. They are united (Freire & Macedo, 1995). Each is developed in relation to the other through critical reasoning about both theory and practice and their consequences (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Action research involves participants in theorizing about what it is they are trying to achieve. They reflect on practice and act on reflections, (Newman, 1998) focusing and refocusing their understandings about not only what is really happening but what is important to them (Wadsworth, 1998). Participants learn a new way of seeing the world, with its influences and power structures as they put their ideas into action (Bradbury & Reason, 2001; Newman, 1998). Ledwith (2007, p. 602) adds that being critical also includes "being self-critical in relation to our own power... and empathetic to the diversity around us" which was

particularly important in this project. We connect our experience to the ideas and perspectives of others, thus developing insights and ideas about how things might be transformed, and then put this new knowledge into practice.

Reflecting on the need to inform my action, I searched for information on the benefits of involvement in music, finding a great deal of literature supporting the importance of music instruction and arts involvement for children. Reflecting on music theory led to a plan and then to action to ensure that Alaska Native children would be recipients of the benefits that involvement in music offers. I was interested particularly in music as it affects the brain and learning, not only academic knowledge but those abilities that allow a student to continue pursuing a skill that is as difficult as playing a musical instrument. I am referring to the skills of perseverance, patience, and self-motivation. And music, like all arts education, employs a variety of learning styles. Practicing music trains students in problem solving techniques. It helps them find their own limits and teaches them that growth happens in small and many times, painfully slow steps. Students learn patience and tolerance, which helps them to keep going during difficult times.

The development of one's mind was a common theme. Eric Jensen writes that music supports thinking by "activating and synchronizing neural firing patterns that orchestrate and connect multiple brain sites. This causes an increase in both efficiency and effectiveness in the brain" (Jensen, 2001, p. 20). He adds that music-making is important for spatial reasoning, creativity and generalized mathematical skills. A study by Glenn Schellenberg found that taking music lessons can boost one's IQ (Schellenberg, 2004). Elliott Eisner teaches that the arts impact the development of mind in three ways: they develop the mind by giving it opportunities to

think in different ways, they make communication possible on matters that operate outside of logically constructed languages, and the arts are places and spaces where one can enrich one's life (Eisner, 2005).

Edward Fiske lists ways in which art can benefit students. These include reaching students who aren't otherwise being reached, or in ways in which they are not already being reached. The arts serve as a force to connect students to themselves or others. And they provided learning opportunities that can involve adults in the lives of youth (Fiske, 1999).

James Catterall, Richard Chapleau, and John Iwanaga found that students with high levels of arts participation outperform "arts-poor" students by virtually every measure (Catterall, Chapleau & Iwanaga, 1999). They also addressed the inequity of access to the arts. Students from low-income and less educated families were much more likely to record low levels of participation in the arts during their middle school and high school years. Many Alaska Native families might find the financial aspects of providing music lessons for their children a challenge. Considering that these researchers are finding that the arts do matter, not only as worthwhile activities in their own right but also as a means of cognitive growth and development, and as agents for school success, this is a serious problem for Alaska Native children in Fairbanks who are in large part, left out of the music scene.

Reflection- Understanding the importance of arts for children, I decided to take action to provide more opportunities to Alaska Native children so they might participate in instrumental music (See Figure 2). For the 1997-98 school year, I hired (act) an instructor to come to school to teach four children after school one afternoon a week. During the following school year, I felt (reflect) that the instructor might be willing to accept more students, which he did, so I added

(act) a few more students. This was a small project – four to seven students during the first couple of years. Seeing (observe) the children attending their lessons and performing at various community venues, getting positive feedback from the school orchestra teacher and reflecting on the growth of these children, I felt (reflect) this might have a positive impact in the lives of a few Alaska Native children. Besides my own observations, teachers, parents and children were invited to evaluate the program. I needed their assistance to determine how this program might better serve them and what perspectives they had about their involvement in the program.

Parents commented on the benefits to their child, particularly educationally including being able to think independently, focus, take initiative, look for patterns in math, persevere, set goals, become motivated, and integrate the senses. They also commented on the cultural benefits of belonging to the program, “Fiddling is such an important part of the Native culture and for them to be a part is wonderful.” They recommended that the program continue.

Student responses included that the program helped them feel better about themselves. Being in the program helped them to show their talent, focus better, improve their grades, accomplish more, enjoy the music as well as the family support that came with involvement in the program. And again, learning about culture was mentioned, “It is important to learn about my Athabascan culture through music and art.”

The Cultural Value of Music

Fiddling has been a part of traditional Athabascan culture for over 150 years. The Hudson’s Bay Company’s establishment in Northeast Alaska and Northern Canada in search of furs is credited with bringing fiddle music to the Athabascan peoples living in the area in the 1840’s. Some of these traders had migrated from the Orkney Islands off the coast of Northern

Scotland. They brought with them their own cultural traditions which included dancing in the form of jigs and reels, and fiddle music to accompany the dances. At the turn of the century, another wave of fiddle and guitar music came with the gold rush. This later music had a country-western influence. Athabascans adopted and adapted this music. Craig Mishler, an ethnomusicologist, studied Athabascan fiddle music, particularly the upriver music, noting that it developed in relative isolation without additional “outside” influences. He writes, “Athabascan men have developed a powerful, beautiful sound and repertoire that is different from any other style of fiddle music”(Mishler, 1993, p.5). (See Chapter 4)

Reflection – I learned a great deal those first few years. I knew little about the Native cultures in interior Alaska. I did not perceive this program as having a connection to the Native community outside of school. However, parent and student responses conveyed that music instruction was meaningful and valuable academically, culturally, developmentally, and socially for these Alaska Native children. As I reflected on their comments and the positive impact that I was seeing (observe) this program have, it was clear to me (reflect) that it should be continued. Their input (knowledge – theory) supported the need for a program such as this in the community and strengthened the resolve (act) of those involved to work together to insure that the program continued and developed.

Reflection – At this time the instructional program of Young Native Fiddlers consisted exclusively of Western (Suzuki) music. As I began to develop a better understanding of Alaska Native culture and music, I worked with (act) a few parents to add a few workshops on Saturdays with a traditional Native instructor. These classes were poorly attended initially. But I wondered (reflect) if developing this part of the program might have a positive impact on the

children who were participating. Again reflecting on my lack of understanding of Alaska Native culture, but feeling that culture might be important to this project, I started researching (act) the impact that cultural connections might have.

Culture and School

Researchers who are writing currently about the cultural and academic lives of Alaska Natives and American Indians agree on one thing; cultural strength bodes well for academic success. Donna Deyhle, an educational anthropologist, studied education in Navajo communities learning that young people who were successful were those with stronger ties to the community (1995). Linda Cleary and Thomas Peacock agreed, writing that Native youth who are connected to their Native culture have lower absenteeism, dropout rates, and higher test scores. They also felt that these youth were more likely to seek higher education and then contribute back to their community, sharing knowledge and skills for the community's benefit (Cleary & Peacock, 1998). Jim Cummins also writes about minority students being more successful if they are not separated from their own cultural values (Cummins, 1986).

Reflection – This led me to feel that if Young Native Fiddlers was more involved with the Native community musically, this might have an impact on students' connection to their cultural community and thus to school success. I was changing in my understanding (reflect) of how this program might benefit children and families. Newman writes that action research is not just about seeing new connections as we reflect; it is also about uncovering our assumptions. Because our interpretations of experience are shaped by our biases and assumptions, examining these assumptions helps us identify what needs changing (Newman, 1998). Having a "Western" worldview, I had thought Suzuki music instruction was the best I could offer these children in

terms of being successful playing “school” music. But it was becoming apparent to me that a cultural connection with music, that is, Athabaskan fiddle music, might be more valuable. In an effort to support this connection, I asked my instructor to teach more fiddle tunes, as fiddle music, unlike Suzuki music, had the potential to lead these children to community connections.

In the following years, the project worked through many plan, act, observe and reflect cycles. But as I learned in this project, these stages are not neatly built steps always followed sequentially, but flexible, with plenty of uncertainty and anxiety. Working through this cycle had a way once in a while of getting my attention in an unpleasant manner. Something quite unexpected would happen or an event would go poorly. Donald Schon tells us that surprise is at the heart of any reflexive activity (Schon, 1987). Judith Newman adds that these are the times when we learn the most. She called this kind of an event a “critical incident” (Newman, 1998). In discussion of Vygotsky’s theory of development, J. T. Zebroski compares development to a tidal wave. There is forward and backward movement that is eventually progressive. “The backward and forward movement makes the new whole, which is qualitatively changed” (Wink & Putney, 2002, p. 89). As the project continued, the cycle seemed sometimes to spiral to a near death of the project, and then rebound again to points where I was certain the project was indeed making a positive difference for children. There was a good deal of ‘tidal wave’ action.

Transitioning: Participatory Action Research

Reflection – March 2007 - We were asked to perform at ‘Mush for Kids’ [a Fairbanks community springtime event]. We were to go on stage at one o’clock. [The instructor] came very late and was harried and grumpy. The children went on stage to perform appearing bored or upset. They performed the same old songs. A few children played most of the songs but the

younger ones played one or two and then just stood there looking around. They were just going through the motions. There was little response from the audience and the children looked like they did not want to be there. Clearly, no one was having fun. It was difficult to watch. I realized that I would not do this to the children again. I was not going to make them go on stage again with [the instructor] and play these same Suzuki songs. Musical performance should be fun and this clearly was not. I was afraid I had lost the whole program.

Reflection – Clearly, I needed to do a good deal of reflecting. I thought things were going well, that the program was progressing smoothly, that children were happy, involved and proud but my observations that afternoon assured me that that was clearly not the case. I realized that by continuing with this instructor who had not been able to change her style of instruction, I was hurting the program. Listening to what the children were non-verbally communicating, it was clear that I needed to use this knowledge to plan again and make changes to the program. I consulted with some parents for assistance with decisions that needed to be made. I canceled the rest of the season with this instructor and instead we hired Bill Stevens, an Athabaskan elder and well known traditional fiddler to work with the children on Saturdays. I was starting to think that all performances should be done with traditional Athabaskan musicians. Perhaps it would be more fun, but especially more meaningful for the children. We did have a performance at the end of the year in which the kids performed the songs they were learning with Bill. The children were smiling, energized and obviously pleased with themselves after this performance, unlike the last one. Some even played solos which had not happened before. The audience reaction was robust, but anti-climatic to me. I had a new understanding of Suzanne Grant’s statement, “It was not until I was able to more fully comprehend the value of reflection that I began to appreciate

the contributions each detour in my research journey made both to the research and my own development” (Grant, 2007, p. 267). The project did not die; it was evolving.

Reflection - As a result of the ‘critical incident’, I felt it was of prime importance to have the children on stage with Native musical leadership. The next fall, on Saturdays, we started group lessons with traditional Athabascan instructors, and the children performed with these groups. I had the feeling of ‘stepping out on a limb’, and I worried about the survival of Young Native Fiddlers. Some of the parents and I observed, reflected and planned. It was clear that these changes stirred a new vibrancy into the program. The program became more “Native”. The music was their own, taught by their experts and performed in their community. And children were staying in the program. For the first time, we had a sizeable group of junior high and high school students. And parents were more involved than ever, taking on responsibilities in the operation of the program.

That was the turning point at which action research evolved into participatory action research. Soon after this “critical event”, changes were implemented; changes that reflected the adapted focus of the program to the needs and musical interests of the children, changes that reflected the increasing involvement of the parents, and changes to the program that might integrate it better into the Native community. This meant changes in knowledge, power and leadership. These changes did not come quickly as I was unsure of how to lead parents into greater involvement with the program. The leadership team started with a few parents and me, working through the PAR cycle. While the number of children participating increased yearly (up to 44 children last year), the number of parents becoming actively involved increased at a much slower pace.

Participatory Action Research is Social and Participative

Everything about learning is social (Wink & Putney, 2002, p. 62). Participatory action research is a learning process resulting in changes in “what people do, how people interact with the world and with others, what people mean and what they value, and the discourses in which people understand and interpret their world” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 565). Unlike other forms of research, participatory action research follows the lead of the participants, not a predetermined agenda as it is the participants who are doing the reflecting and acting. Members of a group create a social space, or in the terminology of Vygotsky, an intersubjectivity, in which they share experiences, information, and meanings and plan purposeful actions. Joan Wink writes that those involved bring their own lived experience from their own sociocultural contexts (Wink & Putney, 2002). Reflection on what we are learning from, about and with each other impacts the actions taken. These reflections between these members influence the outcome of the research (St. Denis, 1992).

As the project evolved, parents were communicating (reflecting) how they felt about the program, what they valued, and what they saw as meaningful for their children. Interviews were conducted with participants so they could explore their experiences and reflections about what they judged to be significant and what they saw as needing improvement. All of us coming from our differing sociocultural places connected to make this project more meaningful for the children with the goal of increasing their well-being. Sefa Dei, Hall, and Rosenberg write that local input needs to come from the grassroots. It should be “ecologically sound, and should tap the diverse views, opinions, resources and interests manifested in the cultural values and norms of local communities” (2000, p. 79). The variety of memberships in the various cultural and

community groups of Athabaskan, Yup'ik, Inupiaq, and American Indian, the schools, the family, the Fairbanks community, the non-Native community, the music community and the community of Young Native Fiddlers, enriched the program as culture became central to it.

Research done *with* participants, not *on* them is critical in Indigenous communities. Community members must examine for themselves the practices or problems affecting their lives and they must be the ones to make the decisions about actions. Learning from one's own experience is a core element of the participatory action research cycle. Doing research in Indigenous communities means that a researcher must develop and maintain trust with the participants, interacting on an equal basis. A researcher must look at research projects in partnership with the community in a way that is responsive to their needs (Davis & Reid, 1999).

Reflection – March 2009 - I find myself struggling with change. A part of my mindset frequently tells me, "If you want something done right, you do it yourself". Three problems have evolved with this way of thinking. One is that the program has grown so large that I no longer have the time to do it "right" while I am attending school full-time. The second is that my "right" is no longer relevant. The important thing now is process. With the parents taking on more responsibilities, YNF is transitioning in terms of knowledge, power and leadership. I find myself trying to gently let go – mentoring and trusting and letting things be done differently than I have done them. Early in this process of change, I defined my role as that of a facilitator. However, I am now seeing that we have all created a space in which, as a team, we work through the participatory action research cycle. The third problem with "right" is that it restricts our vision of the future of YNF. My involvement started with an individual vision. But that is changing to a

community vision as we continue to plan, act, observe and reflect. As discussed in Chapter 1, an Indigenous project is one for the community, by the community.

Participatory Action Research is Collaborative

While there are approximately thirty parents involved in Young Native Fiddlers at this time, six parents and our Athabaskan instructor, Bill Stevens, and I comprise the team that leads the group. At a recent meeting to evaluate (reflect) last year's program, problems were discussed and plans were made to strengthen the organization. One parent accepted the job of president and is working on a business plan hoping to restructure Young Native Fiddlers so the work load is shared among more parents. They discussed what they felt to be the important elements for their children, appreciating especially the friendships and camaraderie that the children were developing as well as the collaboration children enjoyed working on new songs or in teaching each other. It was also important to them to increase the Native presence/instruction at the weekend classes. They are working on a plan to include more "jam sessions" next year so that these children will have more opportunities to work and play together, with an emphasis on "play".

Our new president of Young Native Fiddlers brought her view of a mission statement and a list of values and goals for the other officers to consider at a leadership meeting this fall. With a few minor wording changes, the parents agreed on the following:

Mission statement-

~Dedicated to Education, Family, Tradition, Culture, Community and Becoming Leaders~

(YNF participants work towards academic success, strengthening family ties, preserving the fiddling tradition and culture, giving back to the community, and creating leaders.)

As the cycles of reflection and action continued, so did change. As Yvonne Wadsworth reminds us, “change does not happen at ‘the end’, it happens throughout” (Wadsworth, 1998, p. 8). What had started out as a teacher action research project was transitioning into a community-based participatory action research project. The decisions were mine as I created the program but they became team decisions as parents and the community became more involved. I was now seeing and hearing about personal growth for each of us as we worked together to develop a stronger program. There were changes in leadership, goals, and power structures. We were becoming a team, keeping the program going because it had meaning for each of us in our lives. We shared collaboratively in a community of care for children.

I think it is important when looking at collaboration for a project such as this to also look at and recognize, in addition to the strong central team that is developing, the collaboration at the community level. Our local school district welcomed and encouraged the program and paved the way for instructors to give the children individual lessons at their various schools during nonacademic times. Our community arts association has invited (even prodded at times) the participation of Young Native Fiddlers at community arts events. The Native community has helped with consistent funding each year. The business community continues to support us with donations. And these groups represent only a small part of those who have collaborated with Young Native Fiddlers in any number of ways because they care about the success of these children.

Participatory Action Research is Emancipatory

Parents took risks. Their involvement took them out of their comfort zone. One parent, who took on the job of emcee which involved speaking to the audience at the start of a

performance about Young Native Fiddlers and what they would be doing, remarked that she found herself in the public eye to a much greater extent than she had before. "At first it was a little discomfoting but I've gotten kind of used to it. I still go back to having a little discomfort but I get over it." She felt she was growing because of this experience. She was pushing herself to do more. "I'm not just helping along. I am out in the forefront trying to push things further and doing development for the program and seeing where we can take it".

Parents were doing things that they didn't know they could do. They were learning to confront power as well as to use it to their advantage. They were willing to speak out for what they felt was valuable for their children. Verna St Denis (1992) writes that although community-based action research is difficult, frustrating and time-consuming it is well worth it because it is a process in which the community becomes empowered, making research liberating. Participatory action research has a history of empowering. Delgado-Gaitan (1993, p. 391) discusses empowerment being "an ongoing, intentional process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and collective participation". Peter Reason (1994) notes that PAR starts with concerns for power and the powerless. Their knowledge and experience is honored and valued. The intent is to produce knowledge and actions that are directly useful to a group of people, in the case of this project, Alaskan Native children and adults and to empower them as they construct and act on their own knowledge. Ernest Stringer (2007) tells us that action research is democratic, enabling all interested persons to participate. It is equitable, liberating and life enhancing, enabling the participants to develop their full human potential.

The parents spoke of their empowerment. One remarked about being a Native contributor to the community and the impact that could have on the children, teaching them to be proud of their Nativeness. Another spoke about changing the image of Alaska Natives to one that they were proud of. They spoke about their progress and understanding better what they could do. One said, "I've found that I'm capable of doing a lot more things."

Last fall, the parents put together a Halloween carnival for the children in the community as a fundraiser. This kind of a project seemed like way too much work to me but this was something they wanted to do. It so happened that I was scheduled to be out of town for the two weeks prior to this event so I was limited in how I could assist them. When the evening rolled around, the booths and the haunted house were set up and ready, the games, prizes and snacks to be purchased were displayed and the parents were there to prepare the hotdogs and work with the children at the booths. They even found a local business to underwrite the event. Over a hundred children and their parents, most of them in costumes, attended the event which was held at the tribal hall. It was an extremely successful and positive social event and even raised funds for summer music opportunities. More importantly, I think the parents saw the opportunity to reach out to all of the children in the community, not just those in Young Native Fiddlers. They pulled together something complex as well as labor intensive because they wanted it for the community. I realized they were carrying out their mission statement which included dedication to family and community and they were working on their goals of strengthening families and giving back to the community.

Understanding the importance of family and children in the Native community, it wasn't too much work for them at all.

Parent Reflection – G. “Young Native Fiddlers is the only organized out of school activity that my son is in (and one that I can afford – free!), so it has affected us on many levels. First, attending practices and performances teaches my son how to be committed - it hasn't been easy- and shows him that small steps often lead to big things. Second, it provides a silent message to him that we are carving out time that involves him and no one else; he's at the forefront of our schedule that day, that hour, that minute. Another, Young Native Fiddlers has given us a million different memories that positively highlight our culture and who we are as a people. Fairbanks doesn't often reflect this or embrace all those 'teachable' moments but Young Native Fiddlers does! These memories are forever tied into those public places [in which] my son has performed or practiced; this strengthens the tie we have to the Fairbanks community.

Reflection – At the start of this project so many years ago, it was only about the children – what meaning did involvement in Young Native Fiddlers have for them? What changes could be seen in them because of their participation in the program? However, in these last few years, I have seen such changes in the parents. I have seen them accept challenges to become public speakers, advocates, leaders, fighters, writers, and organizers. I have also observed their pride in their culture and the importance they give to teaching that to their children. In the collaborative spirit of PAR, we have been teachers to each other. Through this PAR process, I grew in understanding of their

Native worldview. Nothing is more important than children and family which has been demonstrated by the countless hours of work they have given to this program.

Conclusion

Young Native Fiddlers started as a simple teacher action research project about seeking access to opportunities for Alaska Native youth to participate in music. Over the course of fourteen years it evolved into a participatory action research project which is well on its way toward creating new knowledge, inviting community involvement and realizing meaningful changes. We have “created critical public spaces where we could come together to connect, reflect and act” (Ledwith, 2007, p. 608), repeating the participatory action research cycle uncounted times. I believe that the participants have been energized and empowered by being involved, coming to see themselves and their contexts in a new way. The project isn’t completed. My goal is to transition myself out of the project. I am reminded of Vygotsky’s “zone of proximal development”, that is, “what one can do today with assistance, one will be able to do by oneself tomorrow” (Wink & Putney, 2002). I expect that the parents will continue to develop the program. Hopefully, Young Native Fiddlers will be a part of the Fairbanks Native community for many years to come, keeping the Athabascan fiddling tradition alive and strengthening children and families.

The following chapter will focus on the tradition of Athabascan fiddling: its history, its transmission, its meaning and its role in healing. It will illuminate the reasons why parents are so involved in developing and strengthening Young Native Fiddlers as well as what its continuation can mean for the community.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Introduction

Music and dance have been part of the Athabascan culture for thousands of years. A much more recent tradition is that of Athabascan fiddling which was introduced to the Athabascans relatively recently. Christopher Geyer writes, "While Athabascan old-time fiddle music is only one type of music performed in Alaska today, it has become an important part of Alaskan musical traditions as representative of Alaskan cultural heritage" (Geyer, 2005, p. 104). Fiddle music and dance was brought to the Athabascans in two waves, fifty years apart by the white men, which included explorers, missionaries, trappers and gold-seekers. These outsiders also brought disease, new religions and colonialism. The Native way of life would never be the same. However, the Gwich'in Athabascans were quick to pick up the new music introduced by the employees of the Hudson's Bay Company which had set up a trading post in Fort Yukon and later by those coming to Alaska with the gold rush of 1900. The music was changed as soon as it was adopted as the Athabascans adapted the music to their needs and history. Historically, the music was performed in the villages and taught to the youth at village gatherings. As time progressed and more Athabascans left their villages for urban areas, the transmission of music had to change as well. These days there is a mixture of opportunities for young people to be brought into the fiddle culture, only some of it traditional. While so much has changed for the Athabascans, there are important ways in which some things have remained steady. The fiddler is still held in high esteem, even the children who are just learning to perform on the fiddle or guitar. Music and dance

still fill the same role of strength, celebration and community: instilling pride, developing individual and community strength, and celebrating culture.

Athabascan Fiddling: The Beginning

The Athabascan Indians have resided in the interior of Alaska for thousands of years as a nomadic group of hunters and gatherers. Music and dance were an important part of their lives with traditional Athabascan dances being performed in villages and camps for potlatches, feasts and various other celebrations. They used a skin drum and wooden sticks to provide a beat for the dancers and singers. Traditional Athabascan songs were composed to commemorate an event, a person's life, or to celebrate special occasions such as seasonal changes or successful hunts (Carlo (a), p. 2). The first influx of fiddle music was brought into the Fort Yukon area by fur traders who set up a trading post on the Yukon River. Music with roots in the Orkney Islands, Scotland and French Canada along with reels, schottisches, jigs and hornpipes were introduced in the 1840's. The Hudson's Bay Company was the first group of Europeans to enter this part of Alaska and Canada that was inhabited by the Gwich'in and Han Athabascans (Geyer, 2005). Jean Carlo wrote "These Athabascans, of the Gwich'in tribe, were the first Alaska Natives to hear the 'new' music. Not only was the sound of instruments new to the ear, the square dances, jigs, and reels also provided a new form of entertainment and self expression for the Native people" (Carlo (a), p. 4). The Athabascan people loved the music and the instruments and quickly picked up the skill, making instruments from anything they could get their hands on. Jean Carlo shares these stories, "Charlie Peter of Fort Yukon, who, as a youth, learned fiddling from Jacob Luke and started playing around 1915, remembered that his first fiddle was fashioned out of a maple syrup can, picture wire, and wire from a rabbit snare. His bow was made of willow and string.

Sally Hudson recalled that her brother Alfred Woods had a fiddle made from a salvaged, wooden macaroni box. Others told of fiddles with violin strings made from lynx gut. Fiddlers used rosin made from pitch” (Carlo (b), p. 5). Many others ordered fiddles from the Sears and Roebuck catalogue. In 1867, when Alaska was sold to the United States by Russia, the Hudson’s Bay Company was forced to leave, but the folk music of the English, Scottish, and Orkney Islands remained in place and continued to be a part of Gwich’in life. Athabascans began to identify with the new music and the dance (Carlo (a)). This music became known as “upriver” music.

The Han and Gwich’in Athabascan fiddlers had a well-established repertoire of upriver music by the time the second wave of fiddle music came fifty years later at the turn of the century with the Klondike Gold Rush. This music was picked up by the downriver Yukon peoples including the Koyukon and Tanana Athabascans. With the arrival of this new group of outsiders came the guitar and new dances such as square dances, waltzes, one-steps, two-steps and polkas. This new musical style included country and western tunes. This music became known as “downriver” music. While upriver music performances typically included just a fiddle and a guitar, downriver music was performed by a much larger ensemble.

Adaptation

John Blacking (1973), an ethnomusicologist, teaches that the human organism’s basic adaptive tool is culture. Alaska Natives had survived for thousands of years due to their exceptional ability to adapt. With few resources in the harsh environment of interior Alaska, adaptability and creative problem solving were essential. This ability to adapt was seen in the music they selectively adopted and adapted. “Where borrowing ends, creative musical change begins” (Kartomi, 1981, p. 229). Alan Merriam, an ethnomusicologist, writes about selectivity

being an important feature of cultural change. "No group accepts innovations from other cultures wholesale, but rather accepts some items and rejects others"(Merriam, 1964, p. 316). This is just what the Athabascans did. Some of the music was adapted and integrated into traditional Indigenous community celebrations (Geyer, 2005). Many tunes were given Native names, and some were composed to be sung in their own language. "Dances of that time such as Jig Ahtsii Ch'aadzaa (Red River Jig), Neets'ee Tl'yaa (Mountain Rope), Varaddii (Brandy), Geh Ch'aadzaa (Duck Dance), and K'ooniit'aii Ch'aadzaa (Handkerchief Dance), are still performed today both in villages and at festivals" (Carlo (a), p. 7). Craig Mishler, an ethnomusicologist, notes,

Outsiders may simply look at Athapascan [historical spelling] fiddlers as Indians playing the white man's music, but they couldn't be farther from the mark. Although initially learned from whites, Athapascan fiddle music has been cultivated in relative isolation from mainstream American country music. Playing strictly by ear and within a strong conservative tradition that is over 140 years old, Athapascan men have developed a powerful, beautiful sound and repertoire that is different from any other style of fiddle music. (Mishler, 1993, p. 5)

John Blacking contends that musical change should not be thought of as unusual. "We should not be surprised by innovation, acculturation and superficial changes in musical performances. They are to be expected, given the adaptive nature of the organism" (Blacking, 1995, p. 154). Kartomi calls the changes in the music 'transculturation' which she defines as "a process of cultural transformation marked by the influx of new cultural elements and the loss or alteration of existing ones" (Kartomi, 1981, p. 233). She adds that this process involves more

than just the addition of a single element such as a fiddle or guitar to another culture but instead, it must also include a creative process. Blacking agrees. Musical change is not caused by contact among people and cultures or the movement of populations he writes, but instead it comes from the people. It is their decisions about music, based on their experience and their sociocultural contexts (Blacking, 1978).

Colonialism

While the Athabascan fiddlers were able to choose whether to adopt this new music or how to adapt it, this was not the case with the rest of their culture. Irreparable harm was done by colonialism. The most serious blow was to their identity as Alaska Native persons. Elise Wolf writes that the loss of identity resulted from both colonization such as missionary and legislative control by the colonial culture, and by neocolonialism, that is, imposed stereotypes, expectations, and requirements (Wolf, 1999). Harold Napoleon would add epidemics to that list. Diseases introduced by the newcomers wiped out large portions of the Native population, including entire villages (Napoleon, 1996, p. 10). Also called “The Great Death”, smallpox decreased the Native population by half and influenza decreased it by another third (Boraas, 1991). Generations were disrupted or lost. The result of these events was alienation from their culture, leaving them without the cultural, emotional, and spiritual connections they need to survive the ongoing process of neocolonialism (Wolf, 1999). This damage has been to both the individual’s and the group’s sense of identity. Wolf adds that many Indigenous communities, including the Gwich’in Athabascans, consider the ability to articulate a coherent sense of identity integral to the health of the individual and community. “Identification with one’s

community forms such a substantial psychological and spiritual aspect of Indigenous identity that to lose it or become alienated from it creates intense personal conflict” (Wolf, 1999, p. 84).

Duran and Duran also discuss loss of identity as a result of colonialism calling it a “soul wound” (Duran & Duran, 1995). They explain that Native Americans hold a cosmological view in which they experience the world as a totality because all entities in the world are connected. Striving for balance and harmony is an aspect of Indigenous worldview which is intertwined with every aspect of the lives of Indigenous persons. All of the physical, psychological, and spiritual phenomena that are a part of their existence make up what Duran and Duran call a “centered awareness”. Having this centered awareness allowed them to live in harmony in their communities. The core of this awareness is where the “soul wound” occurred. “This core essence is the fabric of the soul and it is from this essence that mythology, dreams, and culture emerge. Once the core from which soul emerges is wounded, then all of the emerging mythology and dreams of a people reflect this wound. The manifestations of such a wound are then embodied by the tremendous suffering that people have undergone since the collective soul wound was inflicted” (Duran & Duran, 1995, p. 45). Duran and Duran feel that this soul wound has caused many of the personal and social problems that now trouble many Indigenous communities.

Elise Wolf (1999) insists that it is critical to the healing process to regain a sense of psychological balance which is done by focusing on issues of identity. Indigenous persons must reconnect to their Indigenous community in some way. Music and dance can set that connection in motion, allowing community members to express aspects of their unique identity through performance (Wolf, 1999). Transmission of music in a traditional sense would mean the

transmission of a web of connections, such as family, community or healing connecting physical, psychological and spiritual components. Achieving balance among these components creates health and well-being and gives meaning to life (Goodluck, 2002; HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997). This is harmony.

Wolf writes about the connection to place being essential to recovery. “It is a process, however, that also requires mending, reconnecting or protecting the Indigenous community’s connection with its ancestral place, its environment” (Wolf, 1999, p. 85). “For Natives, sense of place anchors their being and identity in who they are and their relationship to Mother Earth, and the places that have special meaning for tribal groups and members” (Hanohano, 1999, p. 215). Their identity is rooted in the land which has for thousands of years enabled them to survive as subsistence hunters. It has provided shelter as well as a resting place for ancestors, who are their past, their present and their future. It has been a place of rituals, ceremonies and celebrations. The land carries great spiritual significance (Tulk, 2003). Music is a connection to place. And in Athabascan fiddle music, place determines repertoire giving every village a unique sound.

The revival of Athabascan fiddling as a cultural practice is a significant step toward cultural renewal (Diamond, 1994). David Elliott insists that music making is one of the most fundamental ways in which human beings express cultural values and beliefs. “A people’s music is not only something they make; a people’s music is something they *are*” (Elliott, 1995, p. 197).

If it’s a Gwich’in gathering, any kind of gathering, there’ll be fiddle music - a potlatch followed by fiddle music that evening. And that’s what’s going on right

now, all the holidays and special events and all that...It's still going pretty strong

(Interview – Bill Stevens, Athabascan elder and fiddler).

Continuing the Tradition

The American Association for the Advancement of Science published a handbook about traditional knowledge in 2003, which included a definition of traditional knowledge as “information that people in a given community, based on experience and adaptation to a local culture and environment, have developed over time and continue to develop” (Hansen & VanFleet, 2003, p. 3). Athabascan Fiddling is one of these traditions so transmission is critical to its continuation and its place in Athabascan culture. Researchers define cultural transmission as the intentional interventions that are undertaken by a particular culture in order to teach members about that culture (Grantham-Campbell, 2005; McCarthy, 1999). Cultural practices that reflect the values of a particular group and that strongly reinforce group identity are transmitted. It is not a neutral activity as it is intended to define identity for an individual or a group (Blacking, 1995; McCarthy, 1999). Allan Merriam notes “music is in a sense a summatory activity for the expression of values, a means whereby the heart of the psychology of a culture is exposed” (Merriam, 1964, p.225). The degree of transmission of a peoples’ musical traditions to the next generation points out the importance placed on music as cultural power (McCarthy, 1999). McCarthy considers the transmission of music to a new generation to be a primary site for inducting young people into a group’s traditions. It immerses them in the “communal values and passes on traditions that link the generations, symbolically and musically” (McCarthy, 1999, p. 186). Of all the arts, McCarthy adds, music is perhaps “the most sensitive indicator of the

culture”, and is “most closely tied to the subconscious attitudes and assumptions on which we build our lives within a society” (McCarthy, 1999, p. 17).

The generational transmission of cultural knowledge, skills, and values is referred to as enculturation. Bonnie Wade (2004) writes that one of the most crucial factors for music anywhere is the process by which it is taught and learned. This happens in oral, aural or written forms. She explains that oral transmission takes the perspective of the teacher and implies interaction between teacher and learner. Aural transmission instead takes the perspective of the learner, who hears the music through an aural source. Written transmission depends on notation of some sort (Wade, 2004). In music that is taught primarily by oral transmission, the teacher plays a significant role, “as a repository of knowledge and technique, the individual responsible for musical quality, and often a guide in life” (Wade, 2004, p. 17). Marie McCarthy, who has studied the transmission of traditional music in Ireland, instructs that there are two mutually dependent processes that act to enculture young people: socialization and formal education (McCarthy, 1999). “In the process of socialization, certain features are dominant: the interpersonal nature of the learning context, the transmission of music by significant adults in the child’s environment, and the centrality of the affective culture in the learning process, i.e., the values, attitudes, and beliefs that permeate the music practice and surrounding community” (McCarthy, 1999, p. 14). She notes that socialization can provide a young person with both musical models and opportunities to perform within the community (McCarthy, 1999). Children watch the adults playing music and learn it informally as they participate in the group’s social activities (Wade, 2004). Wade (2004) adds that through doing this, they learn about a sense of

place, of music past and present with its blend of adaptation and tradition, and of the meaning of music in their cultural community. And they come to identify themselves as musicians.

Socialization is how Athabascan fiddle and dance have historically been transmitted, at celebrations, in fish camps, or when visiting each other's homes. However, adaptation to the traditional oral transmission process has been necessary in order to continue this tradition, at least in urban centers like Fairbanks. With the movement of many Alaska Natives to urban areas from villages and with the passing away of elders, significantly fewer teachers are now left to transmit this musical culture. Young people, particularly those living in urban areas, have limited opportunities to learn from elders through socialization. Bill Stevens, a well-known Athabascan fiddler and elder emphasizes that Athabascan fiddling is a *living* tradition. He insists on the importance of carrying on the fiddling tradition in Alaskan schools. So in Fairbanks, formal education has been added to socialization as a support to the traditional transmission of fiddle music. In the interior of Alaska there are two fiddle programs for Native youth, Young Native Fiddlers and Dancing with the Spirit. Although both give primacy to instruction from traditional fiddlers, neither is wholly traditional.

The table below compares typical fiddle instruction in the Alaskan interior. Traditional fiddle instruction, which is now limited in availability to children, is on the left end and at the other end is the "school" or studio violin instruction. The center box describes the approach of one of these fiddle/guitar programs for Native youth in Fairbanks, Young Native Fiddlers. Dancing with the Spirit is similar. Individual skill based lessons are given by local non-Indigenous violin teachers to supplement the group lessons taught by a traditional fiddler or guitarist. These group lessons are held at a cultural center in Fairbanks. The individual lessons develop skills

relatively quickly in the participants which enables them to learn a larger repertoire of songs from the elder who is teaching them. It also enables more young people to become stronger players and in turn teach the younger children, thus performing a role in the transmission of the fiddle and dance tradition.

Table 2: Comparison of Types of Transmission of Fiddle Music in Fairbanks, Alaska

Traditional	Young Native Fiddlers	Western (school)
Oral / Aural transmission	Oral / Aural transmission	Oral/aural/written transmission
No tablature used	Some type of tablature may be used	Western notation
Gender specific—males	Not gender specific	Not gender specific
Music learned holistically with repetition	Music learned holistically with repetition	Learn music in pieces—small steps
Place—based (in the village or at fish camp, etc	Music learned outside of traditional place but at a Native cultural center	Music learned outside of traditional place
Time—Lessons are unscheduled	Time—Scheduled regular lessons	Time—Scheduled regular lessons
Role of teacher broad	Role of teacher less broad	Role of teacher narrow
Purpose—cultural transmission, expression of cultural identity, collective music making, performance, enjoyment	Purpose—cultural transmission, expression of cultural identity, collective music making, performance, enjoyment	Purpose—education, performance, enjoyment, expression of identity
Focus—connection to cultural community	Focus—connection to cultural or general communities	Focus—appropriate tone, preparation for performance
Technology – radio, phonograph records in later years	Technology – tape recorder, CD player for recordings of teacher’s music	Technology – many devices available – professional recordings of a variety of world music available

Music and Meaning

If one is to understand the impact of music, one must consider how music communicates meaning and how it functions in the lives of community members. Music and dance create meaning through signs which are basic elements of meaning. A sign can be anything that is “perceived by an observer that stands for, or calls to mind, something else and creates an effect in the observer” (Turino, 2008, p. 5). Charles Sanders Peirce, the creator of the study of signs and meaning, teaches that signs initiate as well as mediate all human feeling, action, and thought (Turino, 1999). What is perceived is called the sign and the effect of the sign is called the object.

One kind of sign is a sign of resemblance. Something can have meaning if it resembles another entity. One phenomenon might look like or sound like another so that is how we group them. Thomas Turino (2008) tells us that these processes are fundamental to musical meaning in terms of style recognition and are basic to our cultural classifications of most things, including people’s identities. This is an automatic process. We recognize patterns and form in music because of these processes. These signs can be used to communicate intended meanings or information. And resemblances can be perceived by a person because of his or her personal history and experiences. Turino (2008) calls this the “internal context” of the perceiver. For example, a jig performed in Nulato sounds like an Athabascan fiddle tune, while the same song heard by someone in Seattle likely has a very different meaning. Signs of resemblance can also include imaginative connections, for example, creating a “train whistle” sound on a fiddle at the introduction of “Orange Blossom Special”.

Another way that a sign can be connected to what it represents (the object) is by experiencing the sign and object together. “Because people commonly hear particular styles of music played by particular individuals or social groups or in particular regions, music typically serves as a powerful connecting point for these types of identity” (Turino, 2008, p. 8). For example, repertoire can identify a fiddler as either an upriver fiddler or a downriver fiddler. Someone playing “Red River Jig” would be identified as an upriver musician while someone performing “Faded Love” would be identified as a downriver musician. Music frequently connects the people and situations where they heard the music. “It is not only the style of the music that stays with us but also the memory of the meaning it had at that crucial time in our lives” (Wade, 2004, p. 15). An example of this might be when a parent hears fiddlers play “Boil ‘Em Cabbage Down”; they might recall their young child performing that song for the first time at the Athabaskan Fiddle Festival in Fairbanks. As John Blacking teaches, “Even the most elementary musical structures are humanly significant forms that have been created and assigned some meaning in culture” (Blacking, 1995, p. 36).

These signs have a strong impact because the connection between these signs and their objects is constructed due to our experiencing them together in our lives. Their emotional power is “directly proportionate to the attachment, feelings, and significance of the experiences that they connect, but since these signs operate to connect us to our own lives, they can be the most ‘personal’ and tend to have the greatest emotional potential” (Turino, 2008, p. 9). These connecting signs can be somewhat unpredictable however, because they depend on past experiences, which differ from person to person. Individuals from diverse social or cultural groups would certainly have different experiences. For example, general community members

in Fairbanks hearing Young Native Fiddlers perform, might focus on the young fiddlers' limitations because they have seen numerous other children with more training perform "better". But this same group of children performing at the tribal hall, in front of their families and extended family members and friends who have come in from their villages, would likely have a different experience that celebrates them as valued members of their community who will be continuing the Athabascan fiddling tradition.

The third way of connecting a sign to an object is by language. These are general signs that are connected by a linguistic definition. The instrument that a child is playing is a guitar because "guitar" is the name given and agreed upon.

According to Peirce, there are three types of effects created by sign-objects relationships. These are a sense or feeling, a physical reaction or response, and "a more developed sign in the mind" including sonic, tactile, olfactory and visual images as well as word-based symbolic thought (Turino, 2008, p. 11). For example, an elder practicing a particular song on his fiddle might remember learning that song at fish camp as a youth, he might remember the smell of the fish and the campfire smoke, he might think of his grandfather who taught him that song and feel respect for his ancestors, he might feel a connection to his cultural community, and he might think that he would like to teach that song to a young fiddler to pass on the tradition. All of these feelings and thoughts came from the same sign, the music he was playing.

Because of signs and symbols, what they mean and how they relate to things, ideas, or feelings, music is recognized by many as a fundamental channel of communication. Of course, it doesn't communicate in the same way to everyone. There can be numerous interpretations of

the music and countless numbers of personal responses (Blacking, 1973). Individual experiences and interactions among people impact meaning. “Art lives in men and women, to be brought out into the open by special processes of interaction. Thus the signs have no meaning until that meaning is shared so that the processes of sharing become as crucial to the semiotics of music as the sonic product which provides the focus for analysis” (Blacking, 1981).

Many write that music can perform a communication function beyond that which a formal language can. People can still share emotions, intentions, and meanings even though each other’s language might be incomprehensible (Hargreaves, 2002). Susan Langer (1948) adds that music can depict the nature of feelings with much greater precision than spoken or written language can. John Blacking describes music as a cultural language.

It is a special kind of language, however, for it is only partly capable of conscious expression; music is also *felt* as well as made and heard: it induces and invokes the participation of the whole person, body and soul, not just the processes of intellectual reason. The human capacity to send and receive messages through tone, melody and rhythm is, then, a biological phenomenon as well as a cognitive one. While all humankind has this innate ability, music, like the languages people speak have their own propositional structures, grammars and vocabularies. How people express an emotion or an idea through music is just as culturally embedded as their evocation through words of the meaning of a myth, or a moral obligation, or any of a thousand other facets of social life (Byron, 1995, p. 1).

Blacking frequently writes about the central place of culture in the meaning of music. He points out that we become aware that a stimulus is exciting only because of cultural experience.

A musical pattern can announce social situations, bringing out particular feelings and even reinforce social values (Blacking, 1995).

“When I sing it gives me [a] strong, good feeling in my heart and in my mind I picture the caribou, and I picture the people eating it...I picture us happy and I picture the old ways, it's like it gives the people a sense of respect...love, it's just love, that's what it expresses is love for our people, the animals, the land, all in one dance...It's like it brings you back and you know who you are and where you came from, and where you're going. It's really special. (Personal communication July 27, 1993)” She [the speaker] is referring to the sense of identity that comes from strong, healthy feelings of belonging and connection with community and cultural heritage (Wolf, 1999, p. 139).

Bonnie Wade sums up the meaning and function of music, “Music is also meaningful because it functions in some way in people's lives. Music defines, represents, symbolizes, expresses, constructs, mobilizes, incites, controls, transforms, unites, and so much more” (Wade, 2004, p. 15).

Music and Identity

One of the primary social and cultural functions of music is identity development (Blacking, 1973; Duffy, 2005; Hargreaves, 2002; Small, 1998; Wade, 2004). “Those taking part in a musical performance are in effect saying - to themselves, to one another and to anyone else who may be watching or listening – ‘*This is who we are*’” (Small, 1998, p. 134). We experience ourselves in a different way. Simon Frith adds that the experience of music is best understood as “an experience of the *self-in-process*” (Frith, 1996, p. 109). But this identity is not limited just to

the individual self but also includes identity as a member of a community for it is about experiencing relationships. Blacking (1995) instructs that the function of music is to enhance in some way the quality of individual experience as well as human relationships. Christopher Small, a musicologist, identifies relationships as the connective process of the arts.

The act of musicking establishes in the place where it is happening a set of relationships and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies. They are to be found not only between those organized sounds which are conventionally thought of as being the stuff of musical meaning but also between the people who are taking part, in whatever capacity, in the performance; and they model, or stand as metaphor for, ideal relationships as the participants in the performance imagine them to be; relationships between person and person, between individual and society, between humanity and the natural world (Small, 1999, p. 13).

Christopher Small (1998) contends that in this language of music, we can understand and articulate those relationships. The arts are a form of communication that integrate and unite members of social groups thus creating community. Music is a vehicle for sharing powerful experiences within the framework of cultural experience and thereby inviting community members to have a greater awareness of themselves and of their responsibilities toward each other (Blacking, 1973), thus developing community cultural resilience.

A special community is formed in performance. Thomas Turino (2008) suggests that people can intimately feel themselves as deeply connected to the community through the realization of shared cultural knowledge and style as well as through participating together in performance. These performances, whether they are music, dance, festivals, or any other

expressive cultural practices are significant in that people “articulate the collective identities that are fundamental to forming and sustaining social groups, which are in turn, basic to survival. Music and dance are key to identity formation because they are often public presentations of the deepest feelings and qualities that make a group unique”(Turino, 2008, p. 2).

Elise Scott Wolf (1999) describes this identity formation through music and dance in her study of Indigenous identity articulation through dance. She defines articulation as having parts that are organized into a meaningful whole. She is referring to identity that is formed both discursively as well as through embodied practices. Wolf describes discursive articulations as personal narratives, histories, stories, and speeches, calling it a “communal experience that includes the sharing of knowledge, cosmology, or ideas with other members of the community”, or in other words, the “mainstay of Indigenous culture” (Wolf, p. 65). Embodied forms of articulation are those that use body movement such as dance or playing a fiddle. They also include subsistence activities, traditions, rituals, cultural practices, and community gatherings such as potlatches. Athabascan fiddling, transmitted by oral tradition is an example of cultural identity being articulated in both discursive and embodied forms. And through that articulation, Athabascan fiddling is able to contribute a strong sense of cultural Identity.

Many Indigenous communities today, as they recover from the effects of colonialism and post colonialism believe that being able to articulate a coherent sense of identity is essential to the health of both the individual and the community (Wolf, 1999). One interviewee spoke about the central place of music in her community.

And in every village, music is so important! It is a necessity, because we have funerals, we have potlatches, we have dances, we have celebrations for different reasons. Music is always brought in where the people are gathered together. It is part of sharing together. And every village has a person that is special, a person that is a musician, and they are called upon because they are needed. They are needed to play music for a funeral, or to sing for a funeral. They're needed to sing for a wedding. They're needed to play for an anniversary, or for a carnival. Music is always one of the components that are brought in when we have large groups, when we gather. Sometimes it is just to lighten the load, you know, but it is always a part of our living in "the vil" [village].

(Interview with Athabascan musician)

"Communitas" and Healing

Music can initiate powerful emotional responses. Christopher Small feels that this indicates that music is doing its job in forming relationships, among sounds and among the participants for as long as it lasts (Small, 1998). Musical performance can take "community" to a new place – a place of unity. Thomas Turino (2008) describes his experience as a performer as having a sense of "oneness" with fellow performers.

I think what happens during a good performance is that the multiple differences among us are forgotten and we are fully focused on an activity that emphasizes our *sameness* - of time sense, of musical sensibility, of musical habits and knowledge, of patterns of thought and action, of spirit, of common goals – as well as our direct interaction. Within the bounded and concentrated frame of musical performance that sameness is all that

matters, and for those moments when the performance is focused and in sync, that deep identification is *felt* as total (Turino, 2008, p.18).

And with fiddle dance performances, one not only has this deep and joyous sense of communion with another or others but one also shares a oneness of place and history and spirit. An Athabascan elder and fiddler spoke about the unity and togetherness that fiddle music can effect.

You know, if you are sitting with a lot of people in the audience, there's no other way that you can make them happy. They can't just get up and dance without music you know. So once you start playing everybody gets up and dances. It gives you a lot of strength and support. My feelings have changed and they're all [participants at the dance] like that you know, they're having a good time together. That's a unity, and the people, we're together. It's a unity, one people. (Interview with Athabascan elder and fiddler)

The performance of music and dance can lead to what Victor Turner calls "communitas" (Turner, 1969). He describes this as a possible collective state achieved through rituals where personal differences are stripped away. This allows people to "temporarily merge through their basic humanity" (Turino, 2008, p. 18). Victor Turner (1969) describes communitas as a "transformative experience that goes to the root of each person's being and finds in that root something profoundly communal and shared" (Turner, 1969, p. 138). He adds that spontaneous communitas is "richly charged with affects, mainly pleasurable ones", describing it as "magical" and as having the feeling of "endless power" (Turner, 1969, p. 139). Turner maintains communitas is the sense of comradeship and communion that is released in celebrations. And

those celebrations affirm our vitality and resolve to continue. Celebrations also proclaim that our society has rich meanings that can be relived in the world of art and ritual (Turner, 1982, p. 29). This is cultural resilience.

We're all proud to be Native and doing what we're doing.... the idea of it is the fellowship of it and we have fun and the Athabascan community loves the music, all of the traditional dances [and] the medicinal aspect of it. That's why the Athabascan fiddle music is so much fun -- the fellowship and the visiting, which is very strong. I'm really proud to be a part of it...The thing is the survival of our culture and tradition (From interview with Athabascan fiddler in Geyer, 2005, p. 143).

John Blacking wrote about the concept of communion, "People are brought together by shared experience and that they share experience through coming together" (Byron, 1995, p. 20). Blacking refers to his study of the Balinese and how they speak of "the other mind" as a state of being that can be reached through dance and music. There is a release from the everyday restrictions of actual time and there is complete absorption in the "loss of self in being" (Blacking, 1973, p. 52). Turino adds that "through moving and sounding together in synchrony people can experience a sense of oneness with others" (Turino, 2008, p. 3).

Nearly all of the musicians I talked to described a "fellowship" among people from different communities that occurs during Alaska Native musical events and festivals. In this sense, Athabascan musicians consider music to be 'medicinal', in that it offers healing from alcohol abuse and social problems and allows people to get together to perform and dance. This fellowship is one of the

reasons that Athabascan music and culture will continue to survive as one musician explained (Geyer, 2005, p. 143).

As I was discussing Athabascan fiddling with an elder who is a fiddler, he spoke about the people in his village and their dances and the impact of their cultural music and dance on healing,

That's a time when there's a lot of healing among the people, when the people gather, for clean fun, especially with the elders there too. They respect their elders, because they are strong, special people. That is the time they want to be like [the elders]. They want to have fun with them. You change your feeling, your attitude has changed. It's not right away. But slowly they give up [their problem behaviors] and pretty soon they are getting stronger and stronger. Later on they just get away from all that [harmful] stuff that they have been doing in the past". (Interview with Athabascan elder and fiddler)

As we continued our conversation, this fiddler spoke about the older people who came to the dance, who felt unwell at the start of the dance but found at the end of the dance, they felt much better,

So a lot of time, I remember that sick people come into the dance, old people. And they're telling us, "Oh yesterday, [I feel] I 'm sick, I'm so sick. But then I went to dance and I forgot about my sickness. I feel good this morning." When you heard the music, maybe down by the [river] bank...You have to check it out, you know. And then you're feeling that you are going to be healed, like that! And then you'll dance with anybody and then when you go home, you'll think

about it, and heal...You feel good, yeah! (Interview with Athabascan elder and fiddler)

Conclusion

Athabascan fiddle music and the accompanying dances have been a part of Athabascan life for over 150 years. Although having been introduced by outsiders, this music was adopted and adapted to serve the Athabascan community. It has been, and still is, a revered tradition. As noted by Blacking in the introduction, an organism is constantly adapting to its changing environment. Athabascan fiddlers have been no exception, as lifestyles have changed, impacting the transmission of this tradition. But Athabascan fiddle and dance experienced a revival as a cultural practice owing to its meaning to individual community members as well as to the entire community. Musicians are currently in the process of using their music to transmit that which continues to serve the community, while at the same time, using the music to recover what was lost due to colonization and neocolonialism. This includes cultivation of strong identities, both individual and community. As a healing power, music and dance are restorative. The rebirth of connections at each performance, at every stroke of the bow, at every two-foot shuffle, celebrates Athabascan values and reaffirms identity and connections to all of life in the Athabascan world. Athabascan fiddle and dance continues to say loudly, “This is who we are”.

In the following chapter, I will explore the impact of music on the children in this community looking particularly at the effect of music as a practice that facilitates making connections, thus leading to resilience. I will also discuss this resilience in terms of individual and community success. These concepts will be illustrated through a case study of a young fiddler. The transmission of Athabascan fiddling will be seen as a gift of great consequence from the

elders to these young fiddlers as well as to the entire Native community. And these youngsters are reciprocating.

Chapter 4: Alaska Native Children: Connecting to Their Culture

“Cultural resilience is a relatively new term, but it is a concept that predates the so-called ‘discovery’ of our people. Our elders teach us that our children are gifts from the Creator and it is the family, community, school, and tribe’s responsibility to nurture, protect, and guide them. We have long recognized how important it is for children to have people in their lives who nurture their spirit, stand by them, encourage and support them. This traditional process is what contemporary researchers, educators and social service providers are now calling fostering resilience. Thus, resilience is not new to our people; it is a concept that has been taught for centuries. The word is new; the meaning is old” (HeavyRunner & Morris, 1967, p.1).

Introduction

I open with this passage because it celebrates the strength of Indigenous peoples who have a long history of cultural resilience. And it speaks to the theme of this chapter - resilience and success among Alaska Native children. In this chapter I will look at this traditional process, exploring the concepts of success and resilience, particularly as they relate to Alaska Native values and worldviews. I will discuss the connection-making that supports this resilience. As an illustration of these concepts, I will focus in particular on a member of Young Native Fiddlers who weaves together individual and community success through his participation in a culturally-focused youth group called Young Native Fiddlers.

Background

As an elementary school teacher in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District in Fairbanks, Alaska for many years, I was dedicated to seeking opportunities for success for all of my students. I searched for a way in which I might do this. Looking to the literature, I found encouragement in the work of Shirley Brice Heath, who studied arts-based youth groups and their impact. The impact included an intensity of certain characteristics including motivation, persistence, critical analysis and planning. She found that in comparison to other youth who were a part of a national sample, youth at arts sites were more likely to win an academic honor, to say that they plan to continue education after high school, and to be recognized for community service and school attendance (Heath & Soep, 1998, p. 3).

Seeing that participation in a youth group which focused on music could lead to development of skills in children that could transfer to individual success, I started a program of violin and guitar instruction for Alaska Native children called Young Native Fiddlers. Along the way, I learned that fiddling is a traditional and highly regarded practice in the Native community (See Chapter Three). This opened my eyes to the potential cultural impact that a program such as this might have on the youth as well as the entire community. For fourteen years now, I have watched children develop through involvement in Young Native Fiddlers and I have come to see success differently, that is, in a way that doesn't prioritize Western definitions, but instead defines success for Alaska Native youth in terms of their cultural community's values.

Success: A Community Response

Success for Alaska Native youth is typically defined in terms of Western standards such as grade point average or a score on a standardized test. The Native community in Alaska felt a

need for more expansive definitions of Alaska Native student success with more holistic measures of that success (Villegas & Prieto, 2006). As a result, in 2005, forty-five Alaska Native community leaders, community members, and advocates came together to discuss their definitions of Alaska Native student success for their children. Malia Villegas and Rebecca Prieto conducted this study for the Alaska Native Policy Center at First Alaskans Institute in collaboration with The Institute for Social and Economic Research and the University of Alaska Anchorage. Their purpose was to explore and share the perspectives of the Alaska Native community and to investigate the community's role in supporting Alaska Native student success (Villegas & Prieto, 2006).

The respondents felt that Western definitions of success for Alaska Native students rarely emphasized the successes, possibilities and capabilities of Alaska Native students and their communities (Villegas & Prieto, 2006). They felt that in order for success to be measured accurately for Native children, the values of the Alaska Native communities needed to be a part of its definition. The participants' definitions of success consistently focused on what it means to be a good human being. They discussed the importance of students knowing who they are, taking care of others, and seeing connections. They felt that successful Alaska Native students are those who can set and achieve goals. A successful student "knows his own worth and value, understands his responsibility to his community, and is prepared to pursue whatever life path he chooses" (Villegas & Prieto, p. 1).

Respondents stressed the interconnection of individual success and community success. Achievement of success for an individual is tied to his responsibility to contribute to the community. They added that in order for a student to do this, he has to know that he is

competent and needed by other community members. “The well-being of the individual depends on the well-being of the community and community success depends on the well-being of the individual” (Villegas & Prieto, 2006, p. 4).

Resilience: An Ecological View

Success is often written about in the literature in terms of resilience. Resilience is usually defined as positive adaptation despite adversity. Adverse experiences or serious threats to adaptation are known as risk factors and might include family dysfunction, poverty, dropping out of school, or friends who use drugs. Being a member of an Indigenous culture can also be considered a risk. LaFromboise and colleagues found in their research with American Indian youth living on a reservation in the upper Midwest that perceived discrimination was linked to a “marked decrease in the likelihood of a resilient outcome (LaFromboise, Hoyt, Oliver, & Whitbeck, 2006). The other factor leading to a possible risk for Indigenous persons are the historical losses associated with colonization (See Chapter 3), namely, unresolved historical grief and historical trauma (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008).

Early studies of resilience focused on the qualities of the individual child that allowed him or her to succeed in spite of risks. Researchers later added the concept of protective factors which are factors that might protect children from these risks. Beauvais and Oetting explain that “a protective factor helps set a trajectory that reduces the probability of serious threats to one’s well-being” (1999, p. 103). There are a number of well-known researchers writing about particular factors either within the child or external to him or her, creating quite an extensive list. Norman Garmezy’s model of resilience includes three broad protective outcomes of adaptation and competence. These are individual attributes, a cohesive family system and a

social support network (Garmezy, 1985). Werner and Smith (1982) summarize protective factors in three clusters; at least average intelligence and dispositional qualities, ties of affection with parent substitutes such as grandparents and other siblings, and an external support system such as church, youth groups or school that rewarded competence. Bonnie Benard (2004) lists personal factors such as social competence, problem solving, autonomy, and a sense of purpose. She also lists three general environmental protective factors: caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for participation and contribution. The surprise of resilience research according to Ann Masten is that these phenomena are so ordinary. It doesn't come from special qualities, she notes, but from the "everyday magic of normative human resources in the minds, brains and bodies of children, in their families and relationships and in their communities" (Masten, 2001, p. 235).

Researchers wanting to understand how risk factors and promotive factors interact to bring about a positive outcome or reduce a negative outcome identified three models of resilience: a compensatory model, a protective model and a challenge model (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). They define a compensatory model as being when a protective factor counteracts a risk factor. For example, Alaska Native children are considered at risk, by being a member of a minority culture as well as having a history of colonialism. By bringing a young Native child to a culturally focused youth group, (a promotive factor) a parent might prevent a negative outcome for his or her child. The promotive factor in this case is not related to the risk factor but can have a positive effect.

The second model of resilience is the protective model. In this model, assets, which are positive factors within an individual, and resources, which are positive factors external to an

individual can assist young people in overcoming risk. This can include supportive persons or organizations. The protective factor can moderate the effects of a risk. For example, a mentor working with a child might moderate the effects of an absent parent.

The third model of resilience is the challenge model. This model can be thought of as an inoculation. It proposes that exposure to high or low levels of a risk factor is connected to negative outcomes while moderate levels of risk are related to positive (or less negative) outcomes. Being exposed to moderate levels gives the young person enough risk that he/she has an opportunity to learn the process of overcoming risk without being overwhelmed. Fergus and Zimmerman advise that the risk has to be challenging enough that a young person will need to use a coping response. In this manner, youth get practice dealing with adversity that is not too difficult for them to overcome (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005).

Resilience and Context

Fergus and Zimmerman's model (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005) steps away from viewing resilience as a fixed factor, instead viewing resilience as a process. Viewing resilience as a fixed state doesn't take into account differences in meanings located in both the circumstances and the outcomes (Wexler, DiFluvio, & Burke, 2009). It especially doesn't take into consideration one's cultural group which will have meaning and value systems that differ. Wexler et al. (2009) argue that resilience is a process that involves personal and collective meaning making and negotiation so it cannot be assumed to be a steady state. Risk and protective factors are not experienced in the same manner by all young people; youth may be resilient in some domains and not others (Luthar, 2006). Many feel that other elements should be considered such as "the

context, the population, the risk, the encouraging factor and the outcome” (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005).

Resilient Reintegration

Glenn E. Richardson (Richardson, 2002) builds on a challenge model of resilience discussing it as a process, attained through disruption and reintegration. He calls this resilience reintegration. This occurs when a disruption causes a person to experience insight or growth (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). The result of this is a strengthening of resilient qualities. Rather than just getting past the disruptive experiences, one actually grows from them in terms of knowledge, self-understanding and increased strength of resilient qualities (Richardson, 2002). Richardson writes that this is a means by which a person “through planned events or reacting to life events, has the opportunity to choose consciously or unconsciously the outcomes of disruptions” (Richardson, p. 310). The process of resilient reintegration requires additional energy, Richardson (2002) writes, and the source of that energy is a spiritual source or an innate resilience. Resilience theory states “there is a force within everyone that drives them to seek self-actualization, altruism, wisdom, and harmony with a spiritual source of strength” (p. 313). Richardson discusses two postulates of this theory. The first is that the source for actuating resilience comes from one’s ecosystem. He explains that the ecological sources trigger resilience in people. This energy that “drives a person from survival to self-actualization may be called quanta, chi, spirit, God, or resilience” (p. 315). The second postulate is that resilience is a capacity in every soul. Resilience theory defines soul as the “whole integrated being of an individual with one’s transpersonal nature or human spirit as the primary guiding force of the system” (p. 315). I think this is another appropriate place to quote HeavyRunner and Morris

(1997, p. 1), “Resilience is not new to our people; it is a concept that has been taught for centuries. The word is new; the meaning is old”.

Cultural Resilience

Michael Ungar also approaches resilience from an ecological point of view. He opposes the concept of a universal set of conditions that can protect all young people, even though it can be agreed upon that certain factors can put youth at risk and other factors decrease risk. What might be described as a risk in an ecological view might actually be considered healthy when examining cultural and contextual factors (Ungar et al., 2007). “We hypothesize that resilience is not only an individual’s capacity to overcome adversity, but the capacity of the individual’s environment to provide access to health-enhancing resources in *culturally relevant ways*” (Ungar et al., 2007 p. 288). Caroline Clauss-Ehlers discusses resilience as embracing culture. She feels that because we are cultural beings, one mustn’t ignore culture and diversity, suggesting that the cultural aspects of one’s background such as cultural values and customs must be considered when defining resilience (Clauss-Ehlers, 2004). Being able to use these values and customs as a resource for resilience is called “cultural resilience” (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008).

One must look closely at context and culture when examining what might lead to success for Alaska Native children. Because people develop as members of cultural communities, their development must necessarily be understood as related to the cultural practices and circumstances of their communities (Rogoff, 2003). And culture guides how reality is viewed. Called worldview, Terry Cross describes it as a collective thought process of a people or a cultural group (Cross, 1998). Worldview can be viewed as “a cultural lens through which we understand where we came from, where we are today, and where we are going” (HeavyRunner

& Morris, 1997, p. 1). Oscar Kawagley tells us that a worldview enables one to “make sense of the world around them, make artifacts to fit their world, generate behavior, and interpret their experiences” (1995, p. 8). These worldviews continue to be relevant and meaningful. “Many of the core values, beliefs and practices associated with those worldviews have survived and are beginning to be recognized as having an adaptive integrity that is as valid for today’s generation as it was for generations past” (Kawagley & Barnhardt, 1998, p. 1). There are two predominant worldviews today: linear, which is typically considered a Western approach and relational (also called holistic), which comprises the essence of the worldview of many Indigenous cultures worldwide. I will explain the relational worldview in more detail.

Lee Little Bear (2000) discusses an Indigenous philosophy in which all existence is composed of energy. Vine Deloria Jr. (1991) teaches that this living energy inhabits or composes the universe. This means that all things are animate and filled with spirit, and in constant motion, thus making interrelationships between all entities of great importance. Little Bear (2000) adds that if all things are in constant motion, then one has to look at the whole to see the patterns, thus requiring a holistic view. A central belief of many Indigenous worldviews is a holistic concept of interconnectedness with all things natural (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003). Plants, animals and all aspects of creation are part of the spirit world as well as the physical world. One has connections to a larger Spirit, the Creation, to all people and to future generations (Soboleff & Merculieff, 1994). The spiritual nature of all things is recognized and respected. Human beings are seen as a small part of the larger structure of the universe but all creatures are an integral part of the sacred life force. Place, an important foundation, is the relationship of things to each other (Deloria Jr., 1991). “For Natives, a sense of place anchors

their being and identity in who they are and their relationship to Mother Earth, and the places that have special meaning for tribal groups and members” (Hanohano, 1999, p. 215).

In Indigenous ideology, a relational worldview defines human behavior as an integrated, holistic and cyclical interaction. Mind, body, spirit and context are connected to each other and continually interact and affect each other (Cross, 1998; Goodluck, 2002). Goodluck adds that there are four elements in a relational worldview: influences from the strengths perspective, wellness as paramount, health based on spiritual elements, and balance and harmony. These give meaning to life. The spiritual domain is the foundation of this worldview (Goodluck, 2002; Heavy Runner & Morris, 1997).

Spirituality and Resilience

As a foundational element of resilience for Native peoples, spirituality is at the core of, and integrated throughout all aspects of Indigenous culture (Graham, 2001; HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997). HeavyRunner and Marshall call resilience the natural capacity to navigate life well, “It means coming to know how you think, who you are spiritually...It involves understanding our inner spirit and finding a new sense of direction” (2003, p. 15). Indigenous philosophy teaches that children are born with an innate capacity for resilience and well-being. Iris HeavyRunner and Joanne Morris add, “These traditional values and beliefs are the cultural foundation, which if respected, extend high expectations, caring and supportive relationships, and meaningful opportunities for participation to Native children. We believe that when these innate, cultural, protective factors are brought into play, the natural resilience of children will be realized” (HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997, p. 3). In addition to being an internal factor that fosters resilience, spirituality can also be viewed as an external factor, as adult members of a society

transmit beliefs and practices that increase the opportunity for promoting connections (LaFromboise & Medoff, 2004).

Terry Cross discusses the effects of spirituality on children. He writes that the mental health community knows that teaching children the traditional stories of their culture enables them to “better develop values and a sense of purpose as well as to maintain a sense of direction”. If these stories are not a part of their lives, children experience a sense of loss and a lack of future orientation (Cross, 2001, p. 23). Having a sense of hope, a sense of meaning, and a sense of purpose, which are a part of spirituality, is widely reported to help individuals cope with adversity and have been identified as protective factors and characteristics of resilient children (LaFromboise & Medoff, 2004).

Balance and Harmony

Balance and harmony are an essential part of this Indigenous worldview (Bergstrom, Cleary, & Peacock, 2003; Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Cross, 1998). Striving for balance and harmony is an aspect of Indigenous worldview that is intertwined with every aspect of the lives of Indigenous persons. Hodge, Limb and Cross (2009) propose a model of wellness for Indigenous persons with a spiritual core around which all other aspects of living are built. This spirituality includes a relationship with the creator. Mental well-being depends a great deal on spiritual practices and teachings and their interaction with the rest of our human experiences (Cross, 2001). Cross teaches that the spiritual connects with the physical. The physical includes all physical aspects such as genetic inheritance, gender, physical condition and things such as sleep, nutrition and substance abuse. People exist in a physical body for this “human journey”. The mind is interconnected with both the spiritual and the physical and includes intellect, judgment,

memories, and emotional responses such as feelings, defenses and self-esteem (Cross, 1998).

The fourth interconnected area is context, or environment. “People are born into a particular family that exists in a community that has a unique culture and history. In turn, this context or environment shapes people in various ways” (Hodge, Limb, & Cross, 2009, p. 214). This includes culture, community, family, peers, work, school, and social history. Spiritual, physical, mental, and context are the four major components that need to be kept in balance. It is not just the extended family, or spirituality that accounts for resiliency but a balance of these four elements. In this worldview, the elements of life – mind, body, spirit and context - have equal weight and are balanced. Cross stresses that maintaining this balance is the essence, the ultimate purpose of our human existence (Cross, 2001).

Terry Cross developed a diagram to illustrate this relational worldview. The outer shape of the diagram is a circle that encloses all of life and existence. The circle is quartered with each of the four quadrants representing one of the four major forces which he writes must be balanced: spiritual, mental, physical and contextual. He emphasizes that these four quadrants are in “constant flux and change” as the system is constantly rebalancing itself as we live our lives (Cross, 1998).

Building upon Terry Cross’s relational worldview model, supplemented by my own research, I developed a diagram which would enable me to visualize more effectively the four parts of the human experience: mental and emotional, physical, spiritual, and contextual, as they relate to the young people with whom I work. I felt this would allow me to better understand the connections that are a part of their lives that enable them to experience resiliency and success. The diagram would be more appropriately done as a sphere because the

demonstration of the interconnections among all parts would best be expressed that way but I am limited technologically to two dimensions. In composing this diagram, I listened to recorded interviews with children who are members of Young Native Fiddlers, as well as recorded conversations with their parents. I studied a number of resources on worldview and looked at research on resilience in Alaska Native/American Indian children as it fit into an Indigenous perspective, promoting balance and harmony and thus, resilience and success. And as Terry Cross (1998) stresses, the balance is always in motion.

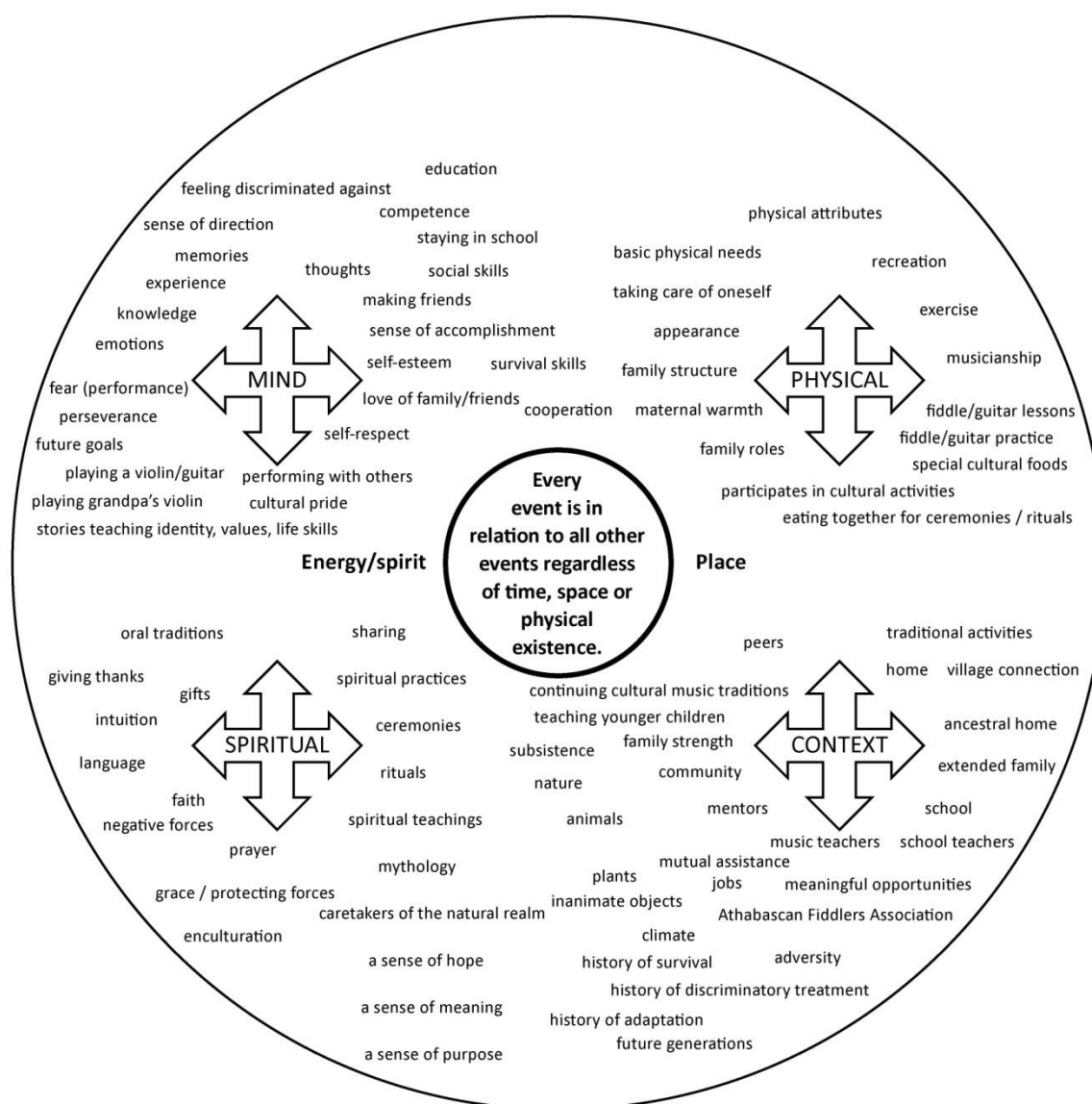


Figure 3: Possible Connections in the Lives of Members of Young Native Fiddlers

Concepts which are the foundation of most Native American/Alaska Native worldviews are placed at the center of the diagram where the connection to all other elements can be easily seen. The text in the center reading, "Every event is in relation to all other events regardless of time, space or physical existence." (Cross, 1998, p. 147) is meant to emphasize that each

element in this diagram is connected to all other elements, regardless of its location in the diagram. Energy or spirit, and place are also in the center as they are fundamental to Indigenous worldviews. My intention when designing my model was to emphasize the interconnectedness of all parts of this worldview. I have seen many *lists* of characteristics of an Indigenous worldview, but I felt this *circular* diagram emphasizes the relational aspect. At times, I wasn't certain about the placement of a particular item, but I realized the reason for this was due to its connective potential. All of the items pertain to the children who participate in Young Native Fiddlers, which means of course that it also pertains to the parents, community, etc. I think if this were a lighted electric circuit board, it would be a hive of activity with all of the elements connecting to each other in a sparkling web connecting mental, physical, spiritual, and contextual with spirit and place being lit continuously.

A Young Native Fiddler Connecting to Community

So that I could better understand the connections that might be made with the students in Young Native Fiddlers, I focused on one student (S) in two situations, one in which he performed on stage at the Athabascan Fiddle Festival in Fairbanks, Alaska and another as he travels with his family to their traditional village, Tanana, Alaska. Looking at the diagram above, I listed connections as they might be made for each event through all four quadrants but of course, this is a linear representation of these connections.

Table 3: Possible Connections Made by One Student (S) in Two Locations

<u>S - at the Athabascan Fiddle Festival</u>	<u>S - traveling with his family to Tanana, Alaska</u>
playing a fiddle/guitar	home
playing grandpa's fiddle	family structure
extended family	family roles
village connection	family strength
ancestral home	extended family
ancestors	village connection
future generations	ancestral home
family strength	special cultural foods
traditional activities	subsistence
continuing cultural music traditions	nature
being mentored	giving thanks
enculturation	sharing
performing with others	eating together
community connection	future generations
musicianship	traditional activities
fear (performance)	traditional knowledge
perseverance	caretakers of the natural realm
responsibility	animals
a sense of accomplishment	plants
making friends	inanimate objects
peers	history of survival
self-esteem, feelings of competence	enculturation
school connection	recreation
a sense of hope	
a sense of meaning	And of course, if S brought his fiddle on this
a sense of purpose	trip, many other connections could be made.

The qualities (attributes) leading to resilience and success are not just a single, isolated quality. The meaning is in the connectedness to other elements. Those illustrated here are only a sampling of connections, from my limited view, that could be made. We are talking about a web that connects all four quadrants. And in looking at these connecting elements in terms of research on cultural resilience, the picture is powerful. I decided to look at this web of connections more closely with the student mentioned above, S, about his experience of performing at the Athabaskan Fiddle Festival. He was twelve years old at the time of his interview. His words are in bold type. I have also included comments from his mother (Mom) which are in italics. And the elements that center on performing at the Athabaskan Fiddle Festival (listed in the box above on the left side) are typed in bold. I have chosen this one experience of his as the center of a web but every element is the center of a web, connected to so many other elements in the four quadrants. I added more explanation or support from the literature with some of the connections listed below due to their salience.

Playing a fiddle

Fiddle music in the interior of Alaska is a 150 year old tradition primarily among the Athabascans. Although Athabaskan fiddling is a relatively new art form for Athabascans, it has developed into an ongoing tradition, responding to changes in the ways of the Alaska Native peoples (Carlo (a)). Mishler writes about its impact, “This musical communication creates a social solidarity that is essential to the social continuum we understand as tribe” (Mishler, 1999, p. 4).

Playing great-grandpa's fiddle

S is playing on the fiddle that connects the centuries. He is connecting history and ancestry with himself and his generation. Clearly, fiddle playing is a ceremony that honors and strengthens relationships.

S: But the violin is a great encouragement for [me] to play. Because it's been in the family, like for awhile. And so, it's just an awesome violin. It's old, it has a big sound.

Mom: After we left the festival, I said "S, that was so awesome to see! My grandpa's violin on stage!" Again, in playing it, I am sure our grandpa's just looking down from heaven just absolutely pleased.

Mom: S picked the instrument all by himself without talking to me, in third grade. He never once spoke to me about it. He came home and said, "Mom, I decided to play the violin and he started talking about who in our family played and what did they play. He wanted to know if his grandpa E. played and I said, "No, he didn't. But your great grandpa played and all the men in your family played the guitar. And so he started making those connections. In an instant he chose orchestra, and then when Young Native Fiddlers became a possibility, it just meant a lot in our lives in a lot of ways but family, it's just meant a lot to our family.

Extended family

S is a member of a large group of aunties, uncles, sisters, brothers, and grandparents and their ancestors.

Interviewer: What connections do you see S making with his music?

Mom: With family primarily

Mom: *The other part that really added strength in my immediate family was the fact that my cousin, R., inherited my grandfather's violin and she didn't play beyond elementary school so when S moved up to the full-sized [violin] she gave it to him. And that was precious because they already had a loving relationship but it strengthened that relationship further because they had something more to talk about and they do talk about it often now. And my family recognizes him a lot more as a musician than anything, because I will post the pictures on our family website and they ask, "How is he, how was the performance?" And my cousin M. gave him a beaded vest that her son didn't use anymore so he wore that at the fiddler's festival. And he is really learning to make connections with family, with our background.*

Family

Family is considered by most major researchers to be *the* most critical external resource in the process of resilience. The family has traditionally been the center of life in Native American cultures. The traditional American Indian/Alaska Native family unit is the extended family. Deloria describes the family as a multigenerational organization of clan and kinship responsibility extending into the future. "Remembering a distant ancestor's name and achievements might be equally as important as feeding a visiting cousin or showing a niece how to sew and cook. Children were greatly beloved by most tribes and this feeling gave evidence that the future was as important as the present or past" (Deloria Jr., 1991, p. 22). The family represents the foundation of the community. Red Horse instructs, "It serves as a repository for value orientations that guide human behavior, as a transactional milieu for life span socialization, and as a basic catalyst for cultural revitalization" (Red Horse, 1980, p. 462). Shawn

Wilson discusses family as a uniting force in that it holds us in relationships as individuals as well as connecting us as individuals to our communities (Wilson, 2008).

One of the most powerful protective factors across models of resiliency is considered to be family connectedness. Researchers found that when adolescents feel “connected” to their family - meaning they feel close to their parents, satisfied with family relationships and have a feeling of being cared for - this “connected” relationship was protective against just about every adolescent health risk behavior (Resnick et al., 1997; Resnick, Harris, & Blum, 1993). Families did not have to be formed or composed in a specified way in order to serve this function as it wasn’t the structure but the connection that was significant. The essence of family connectedness was the experience of being connected to at least one caring and competent adult in a loving, nurturing relationship. Emmy Werner spoke about safeguards that cut across different cultures, creeds and races, emphasizing that a close bond with a competent and emotionally stable caregiver seems to be critical in order for children to overcome adversities. A good deal of this nurturing can come from substitute parents, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, or older siblings (Werner, 1996).

Charlotte Goodluck also examined strengths. She surveyed American Indian documents (newspapers, dissertations, and book chapters) focusing on the strengths written about, and developed a list of 42 strengths. Extended family was mentioned most often followed by spirituality, social connections, cultural identity, child care customs, traditions, stories, kinship and mutual assistance (Goodluck, 2002, p. 32). She categorized these strengths into three well-being indicators for Native American tribal groups: helping each other, group belonging and spiritual belief systems and practices.

Ancestral home

S's ancestors and relatives have roots in the village of Tanana which is located 130 air miles from Fairbanks on the Yukon River.

Village connection

S lives in the urban area of Fairbanks but travels to visit his relatives in the village of Tanana several times a year.

S: I like being Alaska Native. I like going to the village.

Mary Grantham-Campbell discusses Native Alaskan migration from villages to cities and the assumption by researchers that the only choices concerning adaptation were either complete assimilation or an "all-encompassing tribal orientation". She suggests that in Alaska, Natives are not acculturating out of one setting, which is the rural village, into another, which is the city. They are actively living in both settings, and both settings shape the structure and meaning of their lives. They are relying on their rural ties, not sacrificing them, which helps them create "a richer overall ethnic identity which meaningfully shapes their urban experiences" (Grantham-Campbell, 1998, p. 1). She adds that this identity supports success in urban settings, particularly schools.

Traditional activities

These are practiced at both urban and rural homes.

Continuing cultural music traditions

S's Athabascan fiddle instructor, elder Bill Stevens says,

The Athabascan nation in Canada and Alaska is where it all started. It's been going on since 1847, because the Hudson's Bay [Company] was there and there were a lot of

fiddlers in those days, people getting inspired by fiddle music and I got inspired. So I learned, you know, and I learned by ear, so, there's always that potlatch and things going on in the evening. It's been going on since that time and is still going on today, losing its touch a little bit now, but it's still going on, very popular yet, so, that's what I'm doing. That's my main thing - trying to preserve these dances and fiddling music...It's fun to work with them, [the young people] and it's fun that they're learning and keeping it up and that's what I'd like. My desire is to pass it on, you know, and whoever can learn from me, well that's what I really like, it makes me feel good. And I am glad to help anybody, even if they're not young, even older people, if they ask me to help to them I would, what little I know!" [laughs]

Being mentored

S has been studying traditional fiddle music every Saturday during the fall and spring semesters for three years now with Athabascan fiddler, Bill Stevens.

Mentors

Mentors are critical for young people. Helen Marie Klassen (1996) writes that the greatest development of resiliency by Native American adolescents may best occur over an extended period of time and within the context of a meaningful mentoring relationship. Collette Evans calls the importance of connecting the young people with mentors paramount. "There needs to be somebody" (Evans, 1997, p. 281). In her research she found that the young persons who had mentors to provide support were more likely to find and follow the right path. Included in the support of a mentor was stability and security, encouragement, guidance, communication, and time together (Evans, 1997).

Besides starting this relationship at an early age, it is also critical to continue this relationship while young people transition into adulthood. Mentors are often thought of as members of the extended family. Traditionally, this role was filled by elders, the “culture bearers”. Elders taught the young people to understand and practice traditional ways. They also taught them the skills necessary to function in a non-Native society, balancing the skills for the future with the values of the past (Evans, 1997). Elders are considered a connecting force. They connect people to their past, their community and their tribe (Hanohano, 1999). Villegas and Prieto share the impact of elders when they say, “The stories and experiences the elders and leaders shared with us challenged us to think deeply about identity, responsibility, community and leadership” (Villegas & Prieto, 2006, p7.).

Enculturation

Mom: Young Native Fiddlers has given us a million different memories that positively highlight our culture and who we are as a people. Fairbanks doesn't often reflect this or embrace all those 'teachable' moments but Young Native Fiddlers does!

Enculturation

Enculturation is another critical element connecting all four quadrants of a relational worldview. Enculturation is the process by which young people identify with and feel pride in their ethnic heritage and participate in cultural activities. The degree of this involvement is considered to be one of many resiliency factors that can protect children and adolescents (Zimmerman, Ramirez, Washienko, Walter, & Dyer, 1998). While not all researchers support enculturation as a means to developing resilience, many current researchers are documenting the importance of cultural strength for the success of Alaska Native or American Indian children

(Agbo, 2004; Graham, 2001; Zimmerman, et al., 1998) – although the importance of this is something that American Indians have known all along (LaFromboise, et al., 2006).

Enculturation is not a focus on fitting into the majority culture but an affirmation of one's own cultural heritage (Zimmerman, et al., 1998). Zimmerman et al. conducted a study examining the effects of enculturation among American Indian youth. Results showed direct effects of enculturation on self-esteem suggesting that one way to enhance Native American youth self-esteem may be to help them develop a greater understanding of, and interest in, their cultural heritage. They also learned that enculturation can provide youth with a sense of community, a community in which they feel they belong, in which their ethnicity is valued and nurtured. This is likely to have a beneficial effect on their self-esteem as well as other aspects of their psychological well-being (Zimmerman, et al., 1998). Enculturation leads to individual – community reciprocity. "Both the concern of extended family members and the involvement in traditional activities serve to reinforce feelings of connectedness, emphasizing not only the responsibility of the community to care for individuals, but the obligation of those individuals to be productive members of the community" (La Fromboise & Medoff, 2004, p. 47).

LaFromboise, Hoyt, Oliver and Whitbeck (La Fromboise, et al., 2006) studied resilience among a group of 212 Indigenous fifth-eighth graders in the upper Midwest finding the strongest predictor of higher levels of resilience was enculturation. Youth were 1.8 times more likely to be resilient for each increment in enculturation. They felt the most promising finding was that the protective factors they found of enculturation, maternal warmth, and community support, are within the domain of factors that Native groups can influence.

Studying the effects of ethnic identity with 12,368 adolescents, Martinez and Dukes (1997) found that ethnic identity was positively related to self-esteem, self confidence, and purpose in life, which can be considered part of the process of resilience. They add that the findings from their study indicate families and schools can raise adolescent well-being by increasing ethnic identity.

Many researchers write of a positive impact of enculturation on academics (Deyhle, 1995; Nieto, 2000). Measuring enculturation by three dimensions, involvement in traditional activities, cultural identity and traditional spirituality, Whitbeck, Hoyt, Stubben and LaFromboise examined the role of traditional cultural on 196 fifth-eighth graders on three Indian reservations in the upper Midwest. Results showed enculturation to be positively associated with school success (Whitbeck, Hoyt, Stubben & LaFromboise, 2001). Donna Deyhle conducted a decade-long ethnographic study of the lives of Navajo youth. She writes, “Young people who do not have a strong identity as Navajos and are not accepted by Anglos because they aren’t white, face the greatest risk of school failure and unemployment” (Deyhle, 1995. P. 408). Academically successful Navajo students are more likely to be the students who are “firmly rooted” in their Navajo culture (Deyhle, 1995).

Future generations

S’s fiddle is looked at, listened to and respected by two younger siblings. One is starting to play himself as a five year old. He attends the weekend traditional workshops on Saturdays. The tradition is moving through the family. Little sister watches and listens. S also connects with the future generations when he performs at Fairbanks Native Head Start program with Young Native Fiddlers.

S: My brother likes it when I play. He'll ask me to play certain songs.

Family strength

Mom: [Being in Young Native Fiddlers] provides a silent message to him that we are carving out time that involves him and no one else; he's at the forefront of our schedule that day, that hour, that minute.

Fear (performance)

S: I was a little nervous but we were up there as a group, and I wasn't on the mike or anything. But I'm generally pretty good on stage. I've done it before. I definitely like performing in front of an audience.

Performing with others

Interviewer: What connections do you see S making with his music?

Mom: With family primarily. And then, mostly with the other players.

Community connection

Mom: I grew up in the Yukon Flats and the only kind of dances we had were the Rabbit Dance, the Scarf Dance, the square dance... I mean I grew up in Beaver that way, listening to fiddle music, so rediscovering the music brought back a lot of great childhood memories for me. And to see my own child, my own offspring involved in that really touched a soft spot in me because as an urban Native family we really have to purposely immerse ourselves in our activities and our culture here in Fairbanks. Otherwise we could easily lose touch with a lot of community activities. It is a constant struggle to balance how much we can be involved and how much we can keep our routine because routine is really important for our children and...we believe in eating dinner together every night and in cooking almost every meal so that comes before a lot of other things

like a potlatch. And you can't really take a two year old to a potlatch unless you feed them before. So Young Native Fiddlers provides that area that can be missing and is missing sometimes for us. We don't always have to go to all the potlatches because we feel that when S performs or that when we gather, often it fits that sense of community for us.

Mom: We just love the sense of belonging. I didn't realize how valuable it was to us, whether it's cooking [for a fundraiser] with D. [another parent] or talking with the boys [young fiddlers].

Mom: Memories are forever tied into those public places in which my son has performed or practiced: this strengthens the tie we have to the Fairbanks community.

Mom: [to another parent] Any function that Young Native Fiddlers is involved in is guaranteed to be safe. It's something that I never even thought of but it's guaranteed safe for my son. Like I mean, I fully trust all the parents that are involved, and the environment that we're in.

Mom: And if you look at where we have to be with Young Native Fiddlers, we have to be at the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center, the tribal hall, the Charles Davis concert hall, here at D.'s [another parent], I mean the kids aren't just expected to behave in one single building all of the time and that never changes like with public school, but you are asking our kids to do their best, be involved, have camaraderie in different buildings, no matter where they are, at any given time, for various amounts of things, so it's teaching a kind of consistency that I don't think you can really get anywhere else.

Community connection would also include the times S performs as a community service at any number of places including at the Fairbanks Native Association elders luncheon, or for the preschoolers at the Fairbanks Native Head Start program or for the tourists at the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center.

Community resilience

The concept of resilience can be extended to a community or culture. Fleming and Ledogar describe this as “the capacity of a distinct community or cultural system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to retain key elements of structure and identity that preserve its distinctiveness” (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008, p. 10). An example of this is the continuity of Athabascan fiddling as a cultural practice. Transmission of this tradition skipped two, three, and even four generations in many families and a large number of Alaska Natives have migrated to urban areas, away from traditional transmission locations. Alternatives in the method of transmission have been necessitated as a means to keep this tradition alive. There has been a disturbance to the traditional method of transmission of this cultural practice so that the essence of Athabascan fiddling and the identity that is integral to it could be preserved.

Musicianship

S: I am definitely going to have to learn tab [a musical tablature used for old-time fiddling] because Bill [Stevens, Athabascan fiddler and elder] writes all his music in tab.

Perseverance

S: The music? Some of the music is pretty hard. Some of it is really difficult.

Mom: And he did say after festival [Athabascan Fiddle Festival], “Oh I need to improve on that.”

He said, “I missed a...” He missed a part of the song, and so he acknowledged it right away, and said, “I need to fix that.” When he can self-critique himself, it’s one step toward success.

Mom: Attending practices and performances teaches my son how to be committed and shows him that small steps often lead to big things.

Responsibility

Mom: In fact, it's as if you could hand them a musical instrument and automatically he becomes more responsible. [laughing] Because they have to be responsible for that instrument and then they have to do something with it.

A sense of accomplishment

Interviewer: How do you view success for S?

Mom: He feels fulfilled after a performance. That's success for us because it gives him a sense of pride, that he accomplished something.

Making friends

Interviewer (to S): What is your favorite thing about when you come down here to the Morris Thompson Center on Saturdays?

S: Um, like, SK. and B. [also young fiddlers] are here so...you know, if my mom is ever late, I can hang out with a couple of friends. Um, the teachers are pretty cool. And I can just wander around and stuff.

Mom - when it comes to music, regardless of his skill level, I want him to establish lifelong friendships with SK., with B., and with the other guys and girls in his class, in his group and build that sense of unity. That way, and who knows, some day in his future, he may need those relationships or he may continue them indefinitely. So I love that component.

Mom - And I have appreciated that the kids have developed more friendships this year than I have seen at any other time, at least, my son has developed more friendships and to me, that is just as important as the music.

(friendships (connections) among parents)

Mom: *Most recently, I've developed a great relationship with another parent who has taken my son into her home for additional practice time with her daughter. This has impacted both of us tremendously because while the kids are practicing, the two of us have learned to steal some 'mom' time to craft, share, and bond just like the kids are! I'm forever grateful to her and the program for teaching mother and son!*

Peers

Mom: *I'm finally seeing the outcome of our three years of the program. My son has learned, progressed, slacked, and seems to have rounded the bend into semi-advanced because his peers have invested their time sharing with him and believing in him. This regular contact and pressure helps him to feel like he belongs and it emphasizes his role in the group. They want him to be a part of their group so they often prompt him to step up. This is not a tactic that any parent or adult can achieve successfully. At that, he enjoys their friendship and learns better from them than in the traditional classroom atmosphere. I hope that of anything, he combines their friendship with a love of music, which in the end will add the necessary pride in self and culture.*

Self-esteem, feelings of competence

Mom: *[about a performance] He was pretty mellow and he wasn't exclaiming how nervous he was this time. He still understands and recognizes that he's nervous but I think it was family, like a family atmosphere. Because I hardly saw him, I didn't direct him, I didn't tell him, "There they are" [other members of Young Native Fiddlers]. He just went over and took care of this on his own. To be honest, I hardly saw him - until he was on the stage.*

School connection

S: *I've been in Honors Orchestra for a year.*

This is a school district program for upper elementary and junior high school students. The most advanced students are invited to join the orchestra with other students from all of the elementary and junior high schools in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District. They have special practices and then perform in a concert.

Biculturalism

Bicultural Skills

Having bicultural skills depends on young people first having an identification with their own culture (Evans, 1997). "It is a skill learned within the context of a relationship that values and respects the Indian student's culture" (Klassen, 1996, p. 260). With a healthy tribal identity and positive self-esteem, young people have an easier time of meeting the demands of living in two cultures. With biculturalism as a bridge, they can hold on to their positive identity while using tools of the non-Native culture (Klassen, 1996). She adds that it is vital that Indigenous youth, growing up in a world comprised of both their traditional culture as well as a non-Native culture, develop a cohesive and unified identity. The skill of biculturalism is essential for this. Not everyone holds this opinion however. Villegas and Prieto's respondents discussed the danger of having to choose between Western and Native cultures - that they must forgo their Native culture in order to be successful in the Western world. Instead, they say, the community must recognize that "there is only one world, and this is the world that the students must face tomorrow" (Villegas & Prieto, 2006, p. 18). Lee Little Soldier (1985) admits that this ideal of being bicultural and comfortable in both cultures is difficult to attain, but feels it provides a young person with the greatest array of choices.

A sense of hope

“The social supports of family and community reinforce the individual and provide a sense of hope. The praise and admiration of elders and the teachings of mentors promote optimism” (Cross, 2003, p. 358).

A sense of meaning

S: My grandpa actually met me practically halfway [onto the stage] before I went down the steps! [after the performance]

Interviewer: Really?

S: Yeah. And he was grateful ‘cause it’s his dad’s violin [that S plays on] so, and then my grandma was really happy too.

A sense of purpose

S: I was more honored to play at the Fiddle Festival [than honors orchestra] because that’s a huge thing. A lot of people go there.

Conclusion

Young Native Fiddlers started as an arts-based youth group for Alaska Native children and evolved into an arts and *culture* based youth group. Participation in Young Native fiddlers has offered much to S and his family. I suggest that a youth group, especially one focused on the arts, that is deeply connected to culture has the potential to enable young people to tap into the strengths that are important for their lives and critical to their opportunities for success. Involvement in an arts-based youth group such as Young Native Fiddlers teaches children about developing both individual and community resilience. As they work with their mentors, learn new songs, practice and perform, again and again, they learn the value of perseverance, hard

work, and teamwork while learning that they are capable and important. They are learning that they can share with the community, as well as keep their ancestors' musical tradition alive. Young Native Fiddlers is one example of a program with the potential to develop resilient children. Any youth program that emphasizes culture has this potential. It is just that there are so few of them.

As I worked on this paper, I developed a new understanding of the comments made by the respondents in Malia Villegas and Rebecca Prieto's study stressing the importance of and the interconnectedness of individual success and community success. Guided by a worldview built upon connectedness and balance, they did not speak of success as only in individualistic terms or only in community terms but instead they wove these concepts together. The well-being of the individual depends on the well-being of the community and the success of the community depends on the success of the individual (Villegas & Prieto, 2006). With the guidance and support of the leadership team, the youth in Young Native Fiddlers are achieving this success.

In the following chapter, I will expand the examination of the impact of participation in Young Native Fiddlers from one young fiddler to a larger group of young fiddlers. Children, parents, grandparents and traditional musicians will speak about the meaning of involvement in Young Native Fiddlers as well as the meaning of continuing this tradition of Athabascan Fiddling. Reference will be made to the individual success as well as the community success of these children, focusing in particular on empowerment and cultural connection. These youth are developing into culturally healthy young persons with the potential to contribute toward a culturally healthy community.

Chapter 5: Impact of Young Native Fiddlers

Introduction

At the inception of Young Native Fiddlers (YNF), my vision was that this program would provide opportunities to children to participate in music performance who might not otherwise have this option, thus allowing them to receive the many benefits that accompany involvement in music. I saw this as an arena in which they might develop feelings of competence and pride. As I continued the project and learned about the tradition of Athabascan fiddling, as well as about an Indigenous worldview and the concept of success as it relates to that worldview, I felt this project could enable children to reach individual and community success as discussed by Villegas and Prieto in Chapter 4. These two ways of being successful are interdependent: the well-being of the individual is dependent on the well-being of the community and community success depends on the well-being of the individual (Villegas & Prieto, 2006, p. 14). While fiddling can be considered an individual skill, it is the community that transmits the skill to the youth as it builds stronger, healthier children. And it is the community to whom the youth reciprocate.

Young Native Fiddlers has enabled Alaska Native young people to develop individual and community strengths. According to participants, these children feel empowered. They are developing perseverance and leadership, and ownership of their music and their skills. They are in charge of their own learning. They can set goals and are able to take risks. And most importantly, they have pride in who they are and what they can accomplish. Any music program can offer children opportunities to develop these skills, but few music programs can offer children the connections to their communities in a manner that is significant in the Native

community. As children, parents and community members spoke about the impact of the involvement of Alaska Native children in Young Native Fiddlers it became clear that a culturally-focused music program could indeed have a strong, positive impact on the community and its members. Young Native Fiddlers is having this impact as it offers young people avenues to both individual and community success. Using Villegas and Prieto's words, YNF participants can set and achieve goals because they know their own worth and value, understand their responsibility to their community, and are prepared to pursue whatever life path they choose (Villegas & Prieto, 2006, p. 35).

In order to examine the impact of this program upon children, families and community members, I chose these methods for obtaining information: interviews, focus groups, student writing, and survey forms filled out upon enrolling in YNF. Participant observation as we worked through this project also offered insights. My goal was to obtain information that reflected the feelings and views of participants, families, and community members. Participants not only offered views, and feelings but criticisms, suggestions, ideas and dreams as well.

Gathering information

I arranged meetings with children, parents, grandparents and Alaska Native musicians, a number of whom I have worked with for several years in many capacities, at a variety of events, and on a multitude of projects. We conversed in a face to face, semi-structured manner. I made use of a list of topics or questions to talk about but felt free to change them as additional topics or insights arose. All but one of the interviewees were Native (a grandparent was non-Native). Three had American Indian heritage: the rest had Alaska Native heritage including Athabaskan, Inupiaq and Yup'ik. As mentioned in Chapter 4, many Indigenous persons have a different way

of being in, seeing, and interpreting the world than the mainstream white population. Most of the interviewees were connected to their village/s. From my non-Indigenous viewpoint, it appeared they practiced some Western ways but also participated in more traditional activities such potlatches, funerals, dances, etc., each person differently depending upon experiences, background, and needs. The older adults seemed to be the most traditional, while the children growing up in Fairbanks were less traditional but learning about their culture, which is one of the reasons for their being in Young Native Fiddlers. All signed informed consent forms.

It is important to note that the children and parents invited to be a part of this study were those with whom I had a rapport because we had been working together for the program for at least two years (and in many cases more). This means that their children have been able to stick with the program for at least that amount of time. That is not the case with every child who joins the program. There are many young people who join the program and then do not continue for a second year for various reasons. Sometimes it is because they have reached junior high or high school and have too many activities. Other times it is because they don't want to put in the immense effort needed to learn to play a stringed instrument or because they don't love music. Staying in the program also takes a good deal of parent support such as encouraging the child to practice and getting him or her to lessons and performances, and participating in fund raising events. So to start with, these children and their families have special qualities. This program builds on that.

Those sharing information with me comprised a representative sample of those involved in the program. There were eight children involved ranging in age from 6 to 16, with varying ability or willingness to articulate thoughts. They also varied in their passion for music. A

number of children spoke about their love of music, what they were able to do musically, and their friendships with the other young people in the program. The word “fun” was found frequently in the transcripts.

I engaged in field conversations with eight parents including seven mothers and one father. They ranged in age from their early thirties to their late fifties. Parents spoke about their pride in their children’s growth and development and pride in the program that they (the parents) were building. They valued the cultural connection they saw as part of the program. I met with one grandfather and three grandmothers, living in Fairbanks. Their respect for what their grandchild was able to do was a frequent theme of the information they shared. I invited six Native musicians, two of whom were elders to participate in the study because of their involvement in Athabascan fiddling and their ongoing work with these children. They spoke about the young people continuing the Athabascan fiddling tradition. They also frequently made references to the power of music to heal and to the history of music as a healing force in their communities. My exploration of the impact of a culturally-based youth program rests on what the participants have said and done revealing their realities. They have provided all of the data while I explored their comments looking for themes in order to describe the meanings they shared about this project.

I employed the grounded theory method for data analysis. Charmaz describes it as an inductive process starting with individual elements and then moving to more abstract conceptual groupings “to synthesize, to explain, to understand your data, and to identify patterned relationships within it” (Charmaz, 1995, p. 28). In other words, Instead of starting with themes, I started with participant statements or observations. Another characteristic of

grounded theory is that one is collecting and analyzing data simultaneously. The emergent themes that were part of my analysis guided my efforts in future conversations with participants. It became clear that it was not necessary to involve every parent, grandparent or child who is related to this program as significant themes appeared that could well describe the impact of the program from the viewpoints of children and adults. I used the computer program QSR NVivo 8 to assist in organizing data. Participants assisted by checking the data. They reviewed transcripts of our conversations for accuracy in representation. They reviewed the material that was coded into themes for appropriate inclusion. And as chapters were written, participants reviewed them, again, for accuracy of representation.

After studying transcripts of conversations with participants and coding the information into themes, I organized the seventy-one themes into a more manageable unit by combining closely related themes and eliminating those with few references. For example, the theme of problem-solving received only 8 references but those references also indicated a sense of power was felt so they were assigned to the theme of empowerment. And there were only 15 references to school connection so that theme was not considered very meaningful to the respondents. Then I ordered themes by number of references. I found that the theme most frequently referenced was empowerment. When coding the transcripts, I divided empowerment into three themes: empowerment of children as referenced by children, empowerment of children as referenced by adults, and empowerment of adults as referenced by adults. The statements referring to empowerment of adults was valuable information to this project but as parents spoke little about themselves, I did not include that theme when ordering themes by number of responses. I combined empowerment of children as referenced by children and

empowerment of children as referenced by adults because both themes informed me about children feeling a sense of power. Leading to this feeling of empowerment were a handful of related subthemes which were referred to often in the transcripts. These are risk-taking in terms of performance, goal-setting, ownership, perseverance, leadership, self-respect or pride, and enjoyment of music. The second most referenced theme was cultural connection. Cultural connection included references that were also included in the themes of relationships, celebration, identifying as Native, and connection to place. These themes speak to both individual and community success. As this is a qualitative study, the number of references made to a theme was a guide for me in trying to determine the importance of a theme to respondents as it is likely that if they spoke more often about something, it was significant to them.

I have listed the most frequently mentioned themes that I used to organize the comments made by respondents about the children. Also included is the number of references made. The assignment of comments to themes was done by me. Some themes include comments made by members of different groups (i.e., child, parent, musician). In some cases, I grouped themes because they shared meaning.

Table 4: Themes that Emerged from the Data Organized by Number of References

Themes	No.	Notes
Empowerment of children	137	Referenced by children and adults
Cultural Connection	128	
Pride	115	Referenced about child by both adult and child
Relationships	97	Also – family connections- 78, friendships- 55, community connections- 57 , belonging- 48
Enjoyment of music	88	Also – passion for music– 61, desire to learn music- 61, interest in trying new things- 78
Performance (risk)	78	
Perseverance	78	
Goal-setting	78	
Ownership	70	

However, it is not only the number of responses that give a theme value. The most significant aspect was the meaning given to that concept by respondents in terms of impact on the children and the community. For example, “healing” ranged towards the middle of the list but it’s being referred to by all of the adults (in detail by the elders and musicians), as well as by children signaled its significance. In the context of the history of colonialization, I felt this was important to the community. Other topics referenced by members of each group were those members of their own family who were musicians and the importance of continuing the tradition of Athabascan fiddling. School, or education also did not receive many references but almost all of the parents, and grandparents spoke about it, indicating its importance.

Observations are also important for understanding meaning. For example, as noted in my research journal, I saw the focused look on children’s faces when they were trying to make the sound they wanted on their fiddle. I saw the frustration when they were having a difficult time with it and I saw the elation when they played the way they wanted. While I viewed this

scene repeatedly, it did not appear in any interview transcript. Risk-taking that is a part of learning to play and perform on a stringed instrument was not discussed by participants but as Shirley Brice Heath and Elizabeth Soep tell us, they are setting themselves up for critique every time they play with or for another person.

Sharing information

This chapter will present a discussion of the information shared by the participants, particularly those listed above, relative to the two initial research questions: *“What impact does a culturally-based music program have on the cultural well-being of Alaska Native youth?”* and *“What impact does a culturally-based music program have on the community of the participants?”* In the first section, which will focus on the youth who are members of Young Native Fiddlers, and in keeping with Villegas and Prieto’s summary of success for Alaska Native youth, information will be looked at through a lens of cultural resilience, both individual and community. I will examine individual resilience first discussing empowerment, leadership, pride, enjoyment of music, performance and risk, perseverance, goal-setting and ownership. This will be followed by a discussion of community cultural resilience viewed through Villegas and Prieto’s recommendations for community resilience: knowing oneself, seeing connections, and taking care of others. The second section of this chapter, focusing on the second research question about the impact on the community, will address the effect of Young Native Fiddlers on the community by the youth who are involved in the program as well as by the leadership team.

Impact on Youth

Individual Cultural Resilience

Empowerment

I was quite surprised when I examined the transcripts of interviews and saw so many references to children feeling empowered. Feeling a sense of power was indicated by statements about being able to perform in front of crowds, talk themselves through fear, make decisions about the kind of instruments they wanted in their rock band, and about teaching younger children. There were comments about having a special skill as well as sharing that skill. One grandparent said, “He got up in his school, this would never have happened [before], and he played. He takes it [fiddle] to school and he plays. He plays for everybody!” The young fiddlers felt strong enough to speak about their weaknesses and confident enough to plan how they could improve. A few of them started just showing up at fiddle dances in the Native community to try to talk their way onto the stage to perform. Parents and musicians spoke about young fiddlers being able to play with confidence in front of others, enjoying entertaining, and being driven to do better. And a couple of children spoke about being able to manage their feelings or moods with music, “When I feel bad or something, I just start playing and then I feel so much better.”

Empowerment: Leadership

Much research has been done on the benefits of involvement in music indicating empowerment can be expected as a result of participation in a music performance program. However, as Native youth are not likely to have an opportunity to participate in such programs, they don’t have many occasions to feel empowered through music and music performance. It

also occurred to me that in learning about their own empowerment, these young people are developing skills that bode well for future Native leadership positions. So not only will they have the potential to share music and culture with their communities, but they can develop the skills to assist their communities in any number of ways as leaders in the future.

YNF offers these young people many opportunities for leadership. Onstage, the intermediate and advanced young fiddlers alternate leading a piece. This means that they start the song of their choosing, at the speed they want, and then the other players join in. At the end of the piece, the leader kicks up his foot to signal that the song will conclude with the phrase they are playing. They are in charge; everyone else follows them. Another opportunity presented to them at the Saturday workshops is the chance to mentor. The two teachers of the younger students almost always have at least one older student volunteering as a teaching assistant so that the younger children can get instruction that is better focused on their individual needs.

Students take a leadership role in additional ways. During our Halloween carnival fundraiser last year, several of the adult volunteers operating the various concession stands left early, leaving us in a huge bind. Our fiddlers, of various ages, took over and kept everything running smoothly. On Saturdays, one student in particular frequently takes over any string replacements that need to be done. He also takes the initiative to tune up the instruments of the younger students before their lessons. These leadership skills are displayed at family gatherings. One of our youngest members brought out her fiddle to play the only song she knew at that time, 'Boil 'Em Cabbage Down' at a family party. She led and her adult uncle backed her up on guitar.

Recently, one of our long time instructors called the night before our weekend program was to start up and informed us that he would not be available to teach this semester. This instructor taught three small groups of five- and six-year-olds. I envisioned chaos the next day. Our advanced students heard about this situation and asked if they might teach these young ones. We decided to give it a try and it actually worked out quite well. Our advanced students are still teaching the young beginners. The advanced group has also started performing in the community for payment, without Bill. They organize their program and then practice to fine tune it.

They use initiative in seeking out places where they might perform. One child asked his mother if he could go to the lobby of the Tanana Chiefs Conference and just play. When we were operating a coat check for the Tanana Chiefs Conference Christmas party, a couple of young fiddlers wanted to play for the three hundred folks at the party. They arranged a time with those in charge and then played their songs. They only knew two songs at this time so they played them over and over. To their surprise, partygoers plied them with tips so another annual fundraising idea was born. Recently, a nine-year-old brought his violin to his friend's birthday party so together they played all of the songs they knew for the family and friends gathered there.

Pride

The young fiddlers demonstrated pride in four ways, pride in terms of themselves, pride in terms of their accomplishments, pride in terms of the responses they get from their peers at school or from their relatives, and pride in terms of their culture. One of the musicians said, "You teach them pride in their culture, in who they are, taking pride in their family, taking pride

in themselves because that's what's going to make it for them in the long run. It comes from right within them, not from anybody else."

Their pride intensified their drive. A musician commented on this, "The drive to do better was there because 'I am worth something, I am somebody'." A parent remarked about her child being able to stand up in front of people and perform, knowing that she was good enough to do it. The young fiddlers knew that they could do something that most people are unable to do. A 14-year old fiddler spoke with pride about an experience of his in the village. "They had this Christmas dance. I went to [YNF] just the week before and I remember I was learning Eagle Island Blues. I played [Eagle Island Blues] at the community hall for Christmas. And it was cool because like all the little kids were like sitting right there just staring at me like I was like the coolest kid ever!"

Young Native Fiddlers demonstrated pride in terms of their culture. There were comments about wanting to wear a kuspuk or a vest for performances, going to the village, being the member of the family who is carrying on the tradition, and performing at cultural events. They also spoke about wanting to continue to play Athabascan music. It is their music. After a performance a number of years ago, a junior high school student turned to her mother and said, "This is when I really feel Native!" A parent shared, "I think it gives her a sense of pride, of being involved with the group, like the Native Fiddlers. She's very proud of that. I've always taught her to be proud of her Native Heritage and this kind of reaffirms it you know."

Enjoyment of Music

It was a surprise to me how much the children spoke about loving music. They used the words "like", "really like", "really, really like", "love" and "really love" in describing their feelings

about music. This guided them in deciding where music and performance fit into their lives.

Parents used the following terms when describing the impact of music on their child: “on fire”, “passionate”, “raring to go”, “tuned on to music”, and “like a sponge”.

Some young fiddlers spoke of their interest in learning to play additional instruments and others actually owned these instruments and were learning to play them. Besides the fiddle, one was taking piano lessons, two were taking guitar lessons, two were learning to play the cello, and one was learning the mandolin and another plays the bass. Young people spoke about how much they liked learning new songs, and performing. They also spoke about enjoying listening to music, “I listen to music every day, like every day in my room. That makes me feel a part of music. I like playing and making it.” They spoke about it brightening up their day and making them feel better. How they enjoy music has been changing in the past two years in that besides lessons and performance, they now talk about enjoying jamming together.

Performance and Risk-Taking

Shirley Brice Heath and Elizabeth Soep (1998) studied youth afterschool programs looking at academic, sport, community service and arts-focused sites. As a summary of their research, they wrote, “A positive conclusion is that the arts, by virtue of their very nature, carried a particular power for learning achievement both in the arts themselves and in closely related competencies upon which successful performance and knowledge in the arts depends” (p. 3). They found that the arts-based programs made them especially powerful developmental sites because of the accompanying risk. Those involved in the arts set themselves up for critique. This requires that they make a “leap of commitment” (p. 5). This is what our young fiddlers do every time they practice together or perform in front of an audience. The children

spoke about their fear. But they found that after making that commitment and following through, it wasn't so bad. They were nervous but after performing they felt more confident. As a six year old put it, "I think I get a little shy, but um, when I just started [performing], I kept smiling gooder and gooder." A twelve-year-old said, "Well at first it was scary. It got really easier. And then it was fun." For a fifteen-year-old, performing evolved from being scary to being an exciting "adrenaline rush."

Four members of Young Native Fiddlers competed at the National Oldtime Fiddlers' Contest and Festival in 2009. Competing on a large stage, against the nation's best, under all of the lights, with their image on the large screen televisions surrounding the stage was extremely intimidating. Each of our contestants got up by themselves and played their three pieces. It was interesting to me that in this case, they spoke about how nervous they were for each other, not themselves. They felt each other's risk. They all took that "leap of commitment" but were all cut from the competition in the first round. The parents and I watched a surge of excitement and happiness when they were finished with their competition. They had done it! A fourteen-year-old remarked, "We all got beat pretty bad. But I had a lot of fun! That was a new experience for me." And he is working toward competing in this contest again.

Parents' comments echoed the young fiddlers' words. They spoke about their children overcoming shyness and fear and finding enjoyment in performance. One parent commented on a child in the group, "Someone who is shy and withdrawn and all of a sudden, they seem to be 'coming out' and they are able to get up and perform with the group, and they're laughing with the group where before they would have been over in a corner." Being able to work through the fear has ramifications not just for the individual but also for the community in terms

of future leadership abilities. A parent wrote about how positive it was that the young fiddlers were learning to speak and play in front of people without being embarrassed. Another parent added, "I think that having had all that experience of standing up whether it be in front of Doyon's board or the Festival of Native Arts, the performance opportunities have done a great deal to inspire self-confidence and demeanor in public" (Interview with parent).

Perseverance

Heath and Soep (1998) wrote about involvement in arts-based youth groups leading to greater intensity in characteristics such as motivation, persistence, critical analysis, and planning. I grouped these characteristics under the title of perseverance as they all relate and play a part in continuing to pursue a difficult skill. Playing a stringed instrument such as a violin is challenging. In order to persist at this, these children must be motivated, maybe by a love of music, or a love of performance, or an eagerness to share with their community. Those who don't have this motivation and don't have the ability to keep doing something so difficult are unable to become musicians. To advance in skills, a player must constantly critique how they are doing and if unhappy with the outcome, plan a way to make their music sound the way they want it to. This goes on constantly. A young fiddler spoke about persevering. "The music's really fun to play 'cause you get to play like, well it's hard and you want to get better at it so you have to keep practicing at it."

At a performance last year at the tribal hall, a five year old started crying loudly. This was in the middle of the song she was playing with the beginners 'Boil 'Em Cabbage Down'. When we were able calm her down and ask why she was crying, she replied (between sobs) that it was because her music didn't sound the way she wanted it to. She demonstrated motivation,

persistence, and critical analysis but she didn't yet have the experience to plan a way to place her fingers on the strings to get the sound she wanted. But I don't think it will be long until she can do this. Another student expressed his ability to persevere, "I really wanted to learn. I just kept trying and I learned how." Parents also commented on their child's perseverance, having the determination to learn a difficult piece and pushing him- or herself to keep going. One parent said about her daughter, "I see her now where she is pushing herself. She's starting to face the challenges now." That is a valuable life skill.

Parents and grandparents spoke about their children persevering in terms of commitment and application to other areas. In fact, it was not uncommon to hear parents talking about their child working harder when lessons started being taught by Bill Stevens. One parent remarked that when her son saw Bill [Bill Stevens, Athabaskan fiddler] playing, it seemed to trigger something in him and he put more effort into it; he worked harder. "And it showed him if he works harder, he can overcome whatever there is, you know, whatever it is he needs to do to get it done. I think the violin helped him realize that in a lot of things, whether it's schoolwork or whatever else he is going to do in his life." When asked what she thought her grandson got out of Young Native Fiddlers, a grandmother replied, "Commitment, Number One: Responsibility, Number 2. Making sure he practices his talent. Just like doing the homework. I mean it's a commitment. It filters down to everything else he does, whether he's doing homework, whether he's cooking, whether he's snowboarding, there's a commitment there. The music has helped bring that on."

Goal-setting

Another theme was the ability of the young fiddlers to control their own practice and learning, deciding what was important to them and setting goals. Most of them spoke of particular songs they wanted to learn and just the fact that they wanted to learn. Sometimes, their goal was large and sometimes it was relatively small, perhaps just playing a measure of music the way they wanted to. Of course, every time they picked up the bow, they knew what they wanted to sound like and tried to achieve that goal. They wanted to learn. Comments ranged from, "I would like to learn more about Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" to this reply when I asked a thirteen-year-old why he stayed in the program, "Because I want to learn. I want to get places." When I asked him to explain that statement he said, "I want to go to college, get a good education." They were able to evaluate their learning needs. They knew when they needed more practice, and they learned to identify a problem and decide on a remedy, "I am definitely going to have to learn tab (a method of notation used in old-time fiddling)."

Parents and grandparents remarked on the children learning on their own and continually learning new tunes. They spoke about how their child is really "getting into" her music; about how a grandchild is always searching, trying out new tunes; about the youth wanting to learn more techniques and about their wanting to have more jam sessions. A grandparent commented, "He has an immense enjoyment in the music, and being creative, and he is all excited when he figures something out, 'Well, how come I didn't see that before?' And he gets it."

Ownership

This music is theirs. As a grandmother said, “It is something that he earns that no one can take away. It is a wonderful thing that he has, something he can call his own.” When I asked an eighth grade boy why he continued to stay in the program (after five years), he answered with a passion that surprised me, “Because I *really love* playing the violin!” When these children stay in the program year after year, they come to see the music as theirs: theirs to play quietly alone when they need to, theirs for working on to improve, and theirs to share with others. They are musicians. A parent spoke about her young child performing as a beginner when she first understood that she was a member of a performance group, “I guess it was that she finally understood what it was to be a part of this group, and she had a little part in it and she was doing her part.”

Another way in which they expressed ownership was through criticism. At the contest in Weiser one afternoon, they criticized other competitors, not in a mean-spirited way, but in a way that said they were fiddlers and they know how something should be played. On another occasion, I was told by a young fiddler that there were too many performances to go to. Another young fiddler told me that the half-hour individual lesson was too short and asked that he have more time with his instructor. These young fiddlers were telling me, in essence, that this was their group and they wanted things done a little differently.

In addition, I see ownership in relation to place, that is, their musical places. I am referring to the Chief David Salmon Tribal Hall but especially, the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center. These are both places where the young fiddlers feel comfortable. They have spent many hours in practice and performance at both places. They are welcomed, loved and

encouraged. These are the spaces of their musical family as well as their cultural family and they feel at home. The Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center is *their* place.

Education

Education was referenced as related to many of these themes: enjoyment of music, cultural connections, dedication (perseverance), ownership and leadership. When I asked a grandmother what her grandson got out of Young Native Fiddlers she replied, “The love of music, a direct tie to his culture - one that allows him to feel like part of the Native community. In addition, I see the same dedication in his academics, making him a strong student.” Parents related membership in Young Native Fiddlers to academic success. A parent commented,

Last night she graduated and she was noted in the program as being a Presidential Achievement award winner... That’s for academic excellence but with attention paid to those students who have achieved a level of success in music, art, or foreign languages. I know that she has been engaged in both music and art during her two years at middle school. C.S., her best friend, and also a member of the Young Fiddlers group, also received... a Presidential Academic award. Both have been on honor roll consistently.

Young Native Fiddlers is committed to education. Doing well in school is reinforced. Every adult interviewed spoke of the importance of education. I have heard of more than one child being “grounded” for poor grades or that had to miss out on YNF activities until a grade came up. The team sought activities that would support education as well those that maintain a connection with the local school district in a YNF-school district partnership, thus emphasizing the important place of school in their lives. As the group is receiving more invitations to

perform, the team tries to limit the number of invitations that are accepted for the reason that they don't want to overload the children because "school comes first".

Community Cultural Resilience

Success, according to Villegas and Prieto's respondents, is more than just individual skills. The ability to achieve one's full potential is dependent upon an understanding of his or her responsibility to contribute to the community (Villegas & Prieto, 2006). The skills just discussed are all valuable for a community leader. But as reciprocity is a core cultural value for many Alaska Natives, these skills must be shared with the community. Collective success has historically been critical for cultural and community survival. Villegas and Prieto's respondents spoke of the importance to the community of young people knowing who they are, seeing connections and taking care of others.

Knowing Self

A student who feels empowered knows a good deal about him- or herself: about strengths, goals, likes and dislikes. These young people are learning what it takes to achieve. They are well on their way to becoming resilient, that is, able to overcome adversity. In a small way, they do it every time they put their bow to the string. They get more experience with this as they calm their nerves to perform.

As noted in Chapter 4, Michael Ungar tells us how important it is that an individual's community provides access to health-enhancing resources in *culturally relevant ways* (Ungar et al., 2007). A parent commented, "When you have young people and you introduce them to a cultural activity that creates something to bind them, to bring them together, and create a unifying element [for] later in life." The young people in YNF have many opportunities to be

involved in their culture. They are identifying themselves as Alaska Native. Every adult interviewed spoke about the young people identifying with their culture through this program. The young fiddlers themselves did not speak much about culture as a group. But parents and grandparents commented on the pride their child/grandchild has in his/her traditions. "He has a renewed sense of acceptance and pride in regard to his culture", and "Young Native Fiddlers has given us a million different memories that positively highlight our culture and who we are as a people". The comments of children included, "Oh, I like being Alaska Native. I like going to the village." And, when asked on an application what her hobbies were, one student wrote, "Athabascan Fiddling".

Parents and grandparents commented on their children identifying particularly with the music of their culture. A parent spoke about her daughter playing Athabascan music, "This isn't orchestra. This is their music. And I think the more music they play that comes from their elders and their villages, and people like Bill Stevens and people like Billy Demoski, that come from their family, that come from their region, the greater connection they have with their culture." When I asked a student to compare the music he was learning with Bill (Athabascan fiddling) with that he had learned from a former instructor who taught only Suzuki music, he replied, "With Bill, the songs are more traditional and they sound better to my ears."

The young fiddlers who attended the National Oldtime Fiddle Festival a year ago had the opportunity to enjoy listening to other types of fiddle music, notably, Texas style and bluegrass. A couple of them commented afterwards that they enjoyed that music but they wanted to stick with the Athabascan style of fiddling. The draw is not just the music, but the additional cultural

meaning imbedded in Athabascan fiddling: the history, its place in the community, and keeping the tradition of Athabascan fiddle music alive as a tradition.

Seeing Connections

Countless connections can be made with involvement in a cultural musical program such as this. Young fiddlers spoke about connections with audiences, friends, school, siblings, Outside musicians, Athabascan musicians, place, heritage, and the general arts community. The most important connection that a young Native person can make in terms of community success is to his or her family and community, contributing to their well-being. The performances of these children give family members the opportunity to connect with each other as well as their ancestors. In giving the community music, they are strengthening it. One parent spoke about the impact of YNF on the community, “It’s unbelievable what it does for the kids and the families, it brings everybody together, and that’s actually what fiddling did way back when, it brought people together. Yeah, especially for small villages, just bringing the community together. It brings everything back to life; it’s a full circle. And I think that fiddling makes a lot of connections in that circle. It helps everything connect.”

Family Connections

An Athabascan musician spoke about the value of family connections. “When I was growing up, watching my parents, watching my grandparents, and how they connected, those are beautiful memories for me...something that’s a treasure to me...and their joy in singing the Native language with their fiddle music. Same thing with my mom, it was her whole family and with my dad it was his whole family; that joy that I heard through music, it connected me with the whole bigger family.” Parents, grandparents and children all spoke about the music being a

connecting force within their families. There were also many comments among the Athabascan families about which ancestors in their family played music, “My mother is so excited to have a fiddle player in the family again. Her parents were fiddle players. To see her eyes light up watching her great grandson play the same music her mother and father played is truly a blessing.” And after her son performed on her grandfather’s violin at the Athabascan Fiddle Festival, one mother said, “I just felt like I have my grandpa Philip back in some sense. He was a musician.”

There were comments about young fiddlers performing for family members from the village when they came to town and about in-town families supporting the children by attending their performances. A grandmother spoke about how many members of their family attended her grandson’s performance. “We have a whole troop of us show up because this is very meaningful to our family because it’s a tradition and it’s part of our culture and here we are four generations later- one, two, three, four, five – five generations later, finally picking it up.”

A young fiddler spoke about the music that Bill was teaching as being meaningful because of the connection with his family. Speaking about the songs he is learning with Bill he said, “I like those! Because those are like, traditional ones. And every once in a while my grandparent knows one of them!” Another spoke about an important role she had in her family’s celebration, “Last week my sister and I played at my big brother’s wedding and everyone loved our music! It felt good!”

Community Connections

Children are also making connections to community through music. A parent shared, “The kids are starting to enjoy getting out in the community putting on their performances.” The

young fiddlers make connections to their community through their many performances but probably the most important are when they play for the Fairbanks Native Association Head Start program or when they play for the elders. A father said, "Most of the elders are so appreciative, you know. It just pleases them immensely. They like to see young performers... especially when they hear their own Native songs, like Eagle Island [Blues]."

Performing at particular community events was meaningful to the young fiddlers. The Athabaskan Fiddle Festival was seen as a favorite performance. When I asked a student why he liked performing at that particular event, he replied that it made him feel a part of the big picture, "Like we're getting a start on a fiddling career." When I asked him what the big picture was, he replied, "Players like Bill Stevens and all of those kinds of famous people." Another student commented, "I was more honored to play at the Fiddle Festival because a lot of people [community members] go there. It's a huge thing."

And the community makes it clear that the children are valued. There is a great deal of cheering for the children when they perform. A few older members of YNF are starting to be asked to join in with established bands to perform at the fiddle dances. A parent commented, "There are a lot of their relatives out in the audiences cheering them on." An instructor noted, "As they started playing, the audience started cheering right off because they recognized the song and because the kids put out a good sound." Looking at community support in the larger picture, a parent offered, "It's not just put a kid on stage, see what happens. You've got the parent involvement, you've got the support of the schools, and I hope continued support of the schools, and even more support of Native education entities and corporate entities."

Taking Care of Others

This is where I see the greatest teaching and learning happening. And this is where I see the reciprocity that is essential to community resilience. Young Native Fiddlers have been fortunate to receive much mentoring: musical, cultural and social, from many instructors and community members. These mentors have understood the importance of the community, sharing themselves and their culture with the youth. They are transmitting the culture to the next group of culture-bearers. These mentors are also teaching about the power of music to connect with and celebrate community. As the youth learn these songs from their mentors and perform them in their community, they set in motion 'communitas' (See Chapter 3) in which community members feel good, feel they belong, and participate in continuing their traditions.

Mentoring

Mentoring, as a way of taking care of others took place on two levels in this project. One was the instructors and musicians working with the young fiddlers. The other was the more experienced young fiddlers working with the less experienced children. As reported in Chapter 3, Helen Marie Klassen (1996) writes that the greatest development of resiliency by Native American adolescents may best occur over an extended period of time and within the context of a meaningful mentoring relationship. Parents, grandparents and children all commented on Bill's impact from leading the youth to enjoyment of music to leading the children to their culture.

Bill leads these young people to both individual and community cultural resilience. He is the key to the cultural connection offered in this program. Bill is not just teaching songs that are popular in the Native community but he is transmitting a Native way of seeing the world, the

connections (as discussed in Chapter 4) that are necessary for survival. Bill could easily be called the patriarch of this musical family that is YNF. By Bill's example, the youth are learning about respect and concern for each other as family members might. An example of this was discussed earlier in which the older members expressed concern that the younger members weren't performing enough or when they express that they were nervous, not for themselves but for each other.

Bill invites students to learn who they are and where their music comes from. He teaches them about connecting to others. He taught them to play 'Happy Birthday' so they could perform it at family celebrations. As a way of connecting to community, he teaches the young fiddlers what song the elders like and he taught 'Pop Goes the Weasel' for the Head Start children.

The relationships developed between Bill as a mentor and the young fiddlers was clearly meaningful as demonstrated by their comments expressing respect and admiration such as, "He is just excellent. He helps us with songs. And when he's not [physically] helping us, he's showing us a new one and letting us listen and learn by ear." And students appreciated Bill's respect for them, "He doesn't hold us back and he doesn't push us too far forward, he lets us go as we feel."

These children have been on the receiving end of the many gifts that come from being mentored. However, they are being taught more than how to play a fiddle or guitar. They are learning from the masters how to give back to their community. They are learning to teach each other, just as their instructors are teaching them. They give each other pointers, or help each other through a difficult song, or encourage each other. Even the little ones are learning this.

One of our young players, a six-year-old, went up to a five-year-old (who likes to 'saw away' with her bow on the fiddle) and reminded her, "You just have to play slower!" A parent commented, "The other thing that I am noticing is that they want to give of themselves, like I keep seeing that a lot of these older ones are starting to migrate to the younger ones and wanting to include them, pulling them in. And they have actually developed the patience and the skills to be able to do that. And when they see these other kids, they will actually take the time to talk to them and help them." Another parent said, "It's amazing how they interact with each other, even the older ones, you know, as a group. They'll go down and start working with the younger ones and they enjoy it."

The Native adult music community in Fairbanks is starting to reach out to the young fiddlers. When I asked a parent why a particular performance had so much meaning to her daughter, she replied, "There was more of the Native community there. It was recognition among the Native community and the huge crowd [and from] people that are very renowned throughout the area for their music."

Healing

"Music, any kind of music...dancing, singing...it fills you up. And then when you're filled up, your cells heal. I think it does a physical healing, it does emotional, mental. And then generational healing too because now you're bringing something back that's been gone. That's been, you know – and we have all this tragedy from all these years of different things and now you're part of something, bringing something back." (Interview with a grandmother)

Healing was spoken about by all of the adult musicians and elders interviewed in this project, highlighting its importance. Besides the many referrals to fiddling and dancing being “just clean fun”, they spoke about music being a healing power in a number of other ways:

As rejuvenation –

“At the time I am playing, I feel no tiredness, just rejuvenation. But then after I am done, I begin to feel it. It hits me that I’m tired-like, you know. But during the time I am playing, my energy is up. See, when you are playing you forget. Whatever is bothering you leaves you. And that music seeps in through your brain. And then it just rejuvenates you.” (Bill Stevens, Athabascan musician and elder)

As therapy

“It’s fulfilling. It really gives me a good feeling to perform...It’s like the dancing or just listening, it gives me a great feeling. Fiddling itself is like therapy.” (Bill Stevens, Athabascan musician and elder)

As a grieving aid –

“Once you have music in your soul, it will help you...A soul, so low, I see so many people with the music. They play the sad, a little bit slow songs, and it helps them, it is just like the grieving process. It helps them. When they’re done with the song, everybody wipes their eyes and then they get to the fast ones and that’s our fun!” (Interview with a parent)

As a unifying force –

A musician related this experience,

“The best part is when I go to a village, and people have been living together all winter long. And it’s like living in a house, sometimes people don’t get along. But we go to a village, have

dances, and traditionally, if you are dancing a square dance or a rabbit dance, you gotta have a partner. Or if you have a partner that you know you get along with, there'll be another partner and you might not get along with that person, but through the duration of the music, you're going to have to go grab his hand and you've gotta go by him. So I see that once the whole dance, four or five hours went on, at the end of the dance, all these people, you know, they used to not talk to each other or they're never laughing but all of a sudden they start being happy and talking to each other again. And it's uniting the group and that's what I like to see."

Impact on the Community

The second research question considered in this dissertation is, "*What impact does a culturally-based music program have on the community of the participants?*" In Chapter 2, I explored the impact of involvement in this PAR project upon the leadership team and musicians. Earlier in this chapter, I examined the impact of participation in Young Native Fiddlers on the children. It is clear that these young people are contributing to community cultural resilience by developing the skills to give back to the community, impacting it in a significant way. In addition, the leadership team is having a substantial impact on the community. In this section I will consider the Young Native Fiddlers program in terms of impact on the Indigenous community.

Impact of the Young Fiddlers on the Indigenous Community

The greatest present and potential impact of Young Native Fiddlers on the Native community of Fairbanks is the children themselves. As healthy, engaged youth, who are hopefully able to remain so, they have much to offer. As discussed earlier in this chapter, participants in Young Native Fiddlers are learning skills that can make a valuable contribution to

their community. They are carrying on the threatened tradition of Athabascan fiddling. As its transmission skipped two generations, most of the remaining fiddlers are elderly with many having passed on. In fact, besides Bill Stevens, there are only three other Gwich'in old-time fiddlers left. Athabascan fiddling is at a critical point. Music is the connection that invites these children to share in their culture. It is within this frame, as the case study in Chapter 4 illustrates, that they learn about community values and start making cultural connections sharing their individual resilience and strength with their cultural community. In continuing this musical tradition, the young fiddlers are able to continue playing a role in the health and wellness of the community.

As the Young Native Fiddlers continue to develop leadership skills, their potential for community involvement grows. Older members are now participating on the YNF board (leadership team) to give input on the activities and goals of the program. The longer they participate in YNF, the more opportunities they have to develop these skills and the more effective these skills become. In the process of becoming leaders they are developing the ability to set goals and work toward them. They are acquiring the ability to persevere when the task at hand gets difficult. Both leadership and perseverance are learned as part of the challenge of playing the fiddle and performing. YNF members have the ability to work with others as a member of a group: they can organize, consider another's viewpoint, and compromise, as they must do when they perform together.

These young people are able to commit, both to learning – it takes a good deal of commitment to learn to play “Red River Jig” on the fiddle – and to teaching. As mentioned earlier, the advanced students are proving themselves to be effective teachers with the young

beginners, planning lessons to advance these five and six year olds through a progression of skills. Most importantly, these young fiddlers can offer to their community their personal strength along with their pride in themselves, their accomplishments and their culture.

In the Guidelines for Nurturing Culturally Healthy Youth (Assembly of Alaska Native Educators), guiding principles are given for the many persons and organizations that have a part in raising healthy children. Included are guidelines for children so that they may understand and assume their responsibility to become contributing members of their communities. Young Native Fiddlers is an organization in which they can fulfill many of these responsibilities, specifically:

- Learn all you can about your family, kinship relations and community history and cultural heritage.
- Become actively involved in local activities and organizations that contribute to the quality of life in your community.
- Show respect to the elders in your community by assisting them in any way you can.
- Make healthy choices in your lifestyle that contribute to the wholeness and well-being of yourself and those around you.
- Always be a good role model, show respect and provide support to others.
- Participate in apprenticeships with cultural experts in the community.
- Associate with friends who can provide healthy role models that will make a positive contribution to your growth and development toward adulthood.

As a culturally focused youth group, members of YNF are now and will be contributing in the future at least three important gifts: a continuity of the Athabascan fiddle tradition, experience and skill at understanding and respecting Athabascan values, and leadership.

Impact of the Leadership Team on the Indigenous Community

The leadership team has the potential to impact the Indigenous community in Fairbanks in three valuable ways. One is by providing an avenue in which young Alaska Natives can tap into their innate capacity for resilience and well-being (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003). Another is by sharing their own leadership skills that they developed as a result of their involvement in the participatory action research process. The third way of impacting the Indigenous community is by fostering community connections, in both Native and non-Native communities. As students will have opportunities to develop in both communities in the future, developing connections within both communities in a supportive environment is beneficial.

Contributing to Community Cultural Resilience

In looking at the guidelines sponsored by the Alaska Native community for community members in developing culturally healthy youth, (Assembly of Alaska Native Educators) the YNF leadership team acts in a number of recommended ways:

- Recognize that the children of the community are its future and ensure that every child grows up secure in who they are and confident in their ability to make their own way in the world.
- Promote healthy community activities and supportive organizations by involving youth as board members and participants in all functions, meetings, workshops and events related to community well-being.

- Be a good role model for youth.
- Recognize and support accomplishments of community members, including youth.
- When encountering young people and adults in the community, greet them and acknowledge their existence.
- Foster traditional knowledge, values and beliefs in all aspects of community life and institutional practices.

The leadership team created a program that emphasizes the capabilities, successes, and possibilities of Alaska Native youth and their communities, providing opportunities for cultural involvement which enables Native children to know who they are, take care of others, see connections, and set and achieve goals (Villegas & Prieto, 2006). They provide opportunities for the young fiddlers to develop their capacity for resilience and well-being. Connecting with their culture through music allows them to articulate their cultural identity (Wolf, 1999) and through performances they articulate a shared identity with their community (Turino, 2008). One parent spoke about these young people carrying on the fiddling tradition, “A lot of these kids, because of the culture we have that we’re losing, especially the kids who were born [in], or moved to Fairbanks, they could easily lose their culture and traditions. I would say that with this program, they have been able to realize, ‘Hey, this is part of me’ and they’re not losing it. They’re getting it [culture] back through the [YNF] program.” As these young people continue to make these connections to their community, they contribute to community cultural resilience, sharing their skills and strengths through their Indigenous culture.

Sharing skills

Empowerment was not limited to the young fiddlers. As described in Chapter 2, the leadership team also became individually empowered as they worked through the cycle of action and reflection to develop a growth enhancing program for the children. They volunteered a good deal of time and effort in providing opportunities for their children and exploring means for involving additional children and parents. Some sewed Native attire to be worn at performances for children who had none. They ensured that children without available transportation were able to attend performances. They opened their homes for jam sessions so the children could practice and connect with each other. Sometimes parents had to take a risk and speak out publicly if they felt that their child was being denied an opportunity to perform where they should or when they felt they weren't being treated fairly. Parents planned positive, healthy activities that encouraged the development of Indigenous values. An example of this is an activity that was organized for a Christmas party last year for the purpose of developing community. Cross age/ability groups were formed and then these groups had a half-hour to prepare a piece that all members of their group, from beginners to advanced, had an active part in performing. No duplication was allowed. Each group then performed in front of an audience of parents and community members. Parents felt that through this activity, respect and caring within this musical family deepened as well as strengthening connections among youth, family, community, elders and the music of their culture.

Fostering Community Connections

In an effort to share community, the team created activities that were open to all children in Fairbanks such as Halloween parties and spring carnivals. The weekend program is

open to any child interested regardless of ethnicity. The leadership team scheduled Young Native Fiddler performances that would locate the group at a variety of sites representing diverse elements of our community, both Native and non-Native. Leadership team members also contributed to the well-being of the community by bringing their experience as a member of a PAR project. Through involvement in PAR, members have learned how to effect meaningful changes for children as well as for their community. Those skills could well transfer to other community needs that arise in the future. By continuing this project, these members have the potential to continue having a positive, long-term impact, especially in terms of the continuation of the Athabascan fiddling tradition and the development of resilient youth.

The efforts of the leadership team and the young fiddlers are rippling out to the Native community as well as the larger Fairbanks community. YNF has received invitations to perform at fiddle dances with the Indigenous Northern Music Association and the Athabascan Fiddlers' Association as well as for the Alaska Federation of Natives and the Festival of Native Arts. They have performed at many community venues such as International Friendship Day, the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday celebration, Arts Expo, Office of Child Services parties, and the Fairbanks Rescue Mission. And they performed at school events such as the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District board meeting, Alaska Native Education potlucks and elementary school festivals.

This connection to community, however, is not just about for whom or with whom we perform. Partnerships with community groups allow Young Native Fiddlers to fulfill its mission. The Fairbanks Head Start program offered us space for our weekend lessons when we were without a space for the weekend program. As a result, our youth connected with their youth in performance, hopefully inspiring new fiddlers. When we had our next "housing crisis", the

Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center (MTCVC) offered us space to hold our Saturday lessons which had expanded to four instructors teaching eight group lessons. This evolved into a three-year partnership in which parents and children feel welcome and have a sense of belonging. The inclusion of Young Native Fiddlers, by way of the Tanana Chiefs Conference, enables us to continue having traditional fiddle and/or guitar lessons.

Another ongoing partnership is with the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District. Their assistance has enabled Young Native Fiddlers to include children who otherwise would not receive all that YNF can offer. They demonstrate concern for and confidence in these children by allowing our instructors to teach individual lessons during a non-academic time at a child's school. Many children would not receive individual lessons without this option. These community groups contribute to the empowerment of the children in Young Native Fiddlers. The presence of Young Native Fiddlers in the larger community allows its young fiddlers as well as leadership team members to teach about their culture, to share their strengths, and connect in positive ways. It allows the young fiddlers to develop bicultural skills performing in both Native and non-Native environments. Klassen tells us that this skill is learned within the context of a relationship that values and respects the Indigenous young person's culture. Young Native Fiddlers is just such a context. These connections allow members of the group to feel a sense of belonging in the Fairbanks community; that they are involved in making Fairbanks a better community that values the diversity within it.

Conclusion

The research questions addressed in this chapter are, *"What impact does a culturally-based music program have on the cultural well-being of Alaska Native youth?"* and *"What*

impact does a culturally-based music program have on the community of the participants?”

Clearly, at the start of this project when I composed these questions, I knew little about the interdependency of individual and community resilience. It is incomplete to consider either question independently of the other as they are interrelated. It might be best understood in a holistic view much like the diagram on page 74, rather than in a linear manner. For the purposes of this discussion, I will discuss these questions separately. However, the fact that there is such interdependency in this project is testimony to its cultural impact.

Parents, grandparents, Athabascan musicians and the young fiddlers themselves spoke about the impact of Young Native Fiddlers. The areas of impact most spoken about were empowerment and cultural connection. They also spoke about the young people having pride in who they are and what they could do. They spoke about relationships with peers, family and community; persevering when the music or the situation got difficult; setting goals; and about performance and the fear that came with it. They are connecting to culture and coping and learning when challenged. This all took place within a culturally relevant context, their own cultural musical tradition, guided by cultural leaders, and living the values that are basic to their worldview that were addressed in Chapter 4. They are using their values and customs as a resource for resilience. This is what Fleming and Ledogar (2008) call cultural resilience.

These young people are able to reciprocate to their community. They are learning about themselves and their culture. Michael Ungar writes that besides resilience being about an individual overcoming adversity, it is also about the community offering positive resources in “culturally relevant ways” (Ungar, et al., 2007, p. 288). The community, through the leadership team, offers the opportunity to youth for participation in culturally relevant ways, that is,

through cultural music. Through music, they are learning about respect, listening to elders, helping others, seeing connections, and sharing their cultural tradition. Much of this happens because of the direction and guidance of the leadership team who teach about giving back to the community. Both the children and the leadership team demonstrate that through their cultural practices, they can positively impact the community. They foster community cultural resilience.

In answer to the initial questions, the impact to both members of Young Native Fiddlers as well as their community can be seen as fostering individual and community cultural resilience. The community contributes cultural knowledge and opportunities to the youth in order that they might learn cultural values and traditions. The individual children develop their innate individual resilience through involvement in cultural music. They then share their strengths, skills, and cultural knowledge with members of their community. Looking back to Chapter 4 at Villegas and Prieto's definition of success, "The well-being of the individual depends on the well-being of the community and community success depends on the well-being of the individual" (Villegas & Prieto, 2006, p. 4), I suggest that Young Native Fiddlers contributes to individual and community cultural resilience, or in Villegas and Prieto's words, success.

Chapter 6 - Discussion

Introduction

Although resilience has been studied to a great extent in the past twenty years, there is a paucity of studies dealing with Indigenous youth. John Fleming and Robert J. Ledogar reviewed recent literature on resilience research that focused on Indigenous youth, offering five suggestions for further research: 1) more research that could illuminate what makes some Indigenous youth respond positively to risk and adversity and others not; 2) more case studies providing empirical confirmation of the theory of resilient reintegration; 3) more comparative studies on the role of culture as a resource for resilience; 4) more studies that contributed to understanding of how Aboriginal youth, especially urban youth, who do not live in self-governed communities with a strong cultural continuity could be helped to become, or remain, resilient; 5) greater involvement of Aboriginal researchers who can bring a nonlinear world view to resilience research (2008, p. 8). In this chapter, I will respond to these suggestions as they relate to this study, *Young Native Fiddlers: a Case Study on Cultural Resilience in Interior Alaska*.

Positive Response to Risk through Resilient Reintegration

I will open my discussion with thoughts about Fleming and Ledogar's first two suggested areas of inquiry: Why do some Aboriginal youth respond positively to risk and adversity and others do not? And are there studies that provide empirical confirmation of the theory of resilient reintegration among Aboriginal youth? *Young Native Fiddlers* is an example of an opportunity for youth to demonstrate resilient reintegration, responding positively to risk and adversity. The key to being able to do this is cultural involvement and community support.

A discussion of Glenn E. Richardson's (Richardson, 2002) theory of resilient reintegration can be found in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. This theory offers a positive framework in which a young person might respond in a resilient manner, meaning he or she accepts the risk or disruption, and then returns to a previous sense of balance as well as advancing his or her learning in the form of new growth or insight (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). This process starts when a young person is confronted with a risk which includes enough stress that he or she learns how to overcome it, but not enough that it would be more than he or she could handle. Resilient reintegration occurs when this youth experiences learning or growth as a result of this disruption. Rather than just getting past a challenging event, this results in gaining new knowledge of oneself and one's abilities. And it develops stronger individual resilience skills. Richardson suggests that these challenging events can be planned (which is typical in Young Native Fiddlers) or can just be a response to events that happen in life but can include the "opportunity to choose consciously or unconsciously the outcomes of disruptions" (Fleming & Ledogar, p. 310).

Almost all of the children in Young Native Fiddlers, being Indigenous, can be considered "at risk" because as with most Indigenous persons, there can be vulnerabilities as a result of past historical trauma. Some of the children experience additional risk factors which is concerning as risk factors occurring together have a greater impact on a person than those occurring independently (Rutter, 2000). Additional risk factors that have been identified for members of Young Native Fiddlers are hyperactive attention deficit disorder, learning disabilities, fetal alcohol/drug effects, and neglect or abuse causing children to be placed in foster homes. In some years children have had parents who are absent due to substance abuse treatment or

incarceration and youth who are homeless. Some children have parents with parenting challenges. And one of our long-time students deals with chronic health issues. Added to these risks are those mild to medium risks attached to learning to play a fiddle and performing in front of others.

Shirley Brice Heath and Elizabeth Soep discuss risk as a companion of those involved in the arts. As noted in Chapter 5, they write that involvement in the arts demands that the participants make a “leap of commitment” (Heath & Soep, 1998, p. 5). Participants take a risk at every practice or performance. Of course, this is not the kind of risk with great potential for harm. But it is a risk that must be taken in order to see growth. They must choose to move past their comfort level and open themselves up to critique or they won’t advance. They learn in incremental steps to work through each challenge and move on to a more difficult test. This is planned risk that I would call “guided risk”. The scope of risks in this program ranges from playing a simple rhythm with an instructor to playing a solo on stage in front of hundreds of people with a multitude of stages in-between. They can be judged as responding successfully to risk for the reasons that many stay in the program for multiple years, even into high school, and their growth is apparent in their performance, and their repertoire.

In Young Native Fiddlers, facing challenges is a frequent activity. Working through obstacles is more than just accepting risk and working through it but it is also learning how to plan to reach a goal. YNF members learn they can accomplish what they want if they make the investment of effort: it is their decision. For example, in order to advance to Bill’s advanced group, they need to have a repertoire of eight to ten fiddle tunes that they have memorized. They must commit themselves to learning and develop a plan that will take them step by step

past obstacles. One parent said about her son, “He said that he wanted to quit in the first couple of years, and it was really hard for him and then when he saw Bill [Bill Stevens, Athabaskan fiddler] playing, I think it triggered something in him and he just put more into it. He worked harder. And it showed him if he works harder, he can overcome whatever there is, you know, whatever it is he needs to do to get it done. I think the violin helped him realize that in a lot of things, whether it’s schoolwork or whatever else he is going to do in his life”.

Another feature of an arts program that is significant according to Heath and Soep is that in the arts, a person is connecting the present with the future. “The artist must see beyond the moment or the usual to what can be next and must see the self as possible in that making” (Heath & Soep, 1998, p. 6). Playing a fiddle means looking forward to the next difficult piece, the next skill to be learned or the next performance. Young fiddlers envision what is ahead for them if they move past the risk. If they are cognizant of the learning or growth that can occur, perhaps it is less difficult to confront risk. I suggest that learning to look past an obstacle is helpful to becoming more resilient.

The context in which young fiddlers take these risks is a cultural context. It is a safe environment including their family, their community and what one parent called their “musical family” meaning the other children, the teachers, and the leadership of Young Native Fiddlers. They work through these risks in a supportive system. Parents transport them to practices and assist them in finding a practice place and a safe location for the fiddle at home. They attend their child’s performances. Their community supports the young fiddlers loudly when they perform, rewarding them for taking the risk. Their musical family rewards them with friendship

and belonging as well as suggestions for improvement. And the reward they give themselves is empowerment. They own their skills: they are Native fiddlers.

It is the cultural connection that provides the impetus and enables youth to respond positively to risk and resilience. Bill Stevens fulfills the traditional role of an elder. He is the culture-bearer who is willing to pass on his wisdom and skill to any young person interested in learning from him. It is his task, according to the Alaska Native Knowledge Network Guidelines for Developing Culturally Healthy Youth (Assembly of Alaska Native Educators, p. 3), to help nurture culturally-healthy youth. It is also his great joy. I see Bill's contributions particularly in these areas: developing, nurturing, and mentoring leadership potential; providing guidance and assistance in respecting traditional ways of knowing, teaching, and listening; passing on cultural knowledge to the younger generations in the community; and serving as a role model and mentor to young people by practicing and reinforcing traditional values and behaviors in the everyday life of the community. Bill teaches not just musical culture but values and other cultural practices as well.

That is why parents make sure they get their child to practice on Saturday mornings. That is why Bill Stevens teaches for two hours every Saturday. That is why the community treats these young fiddlers with respect at a performance. And that is why their musical family has such a bond. They are growing with the challenges they accept and move past. And they are performing the music of their ancestors. As one instructor said about them, "They are somebody." And in keeping with their cultural ways, as mentioned in Chapter 5, they are sharing with their community.

So my answer to the question of what makes some Aboriginal youth respond positively to risk and adversity and others not, based on my studies and experience with this project is that involvement in a culturally-based youth group, organized by their cultural community can provide meaningful opportunities to learn the process of resilience in a safe, culturally significant way. Because of the lack of culturally focused youth groups in many communities, too many young people don't have opportunities to learn to overcome obstacles in a supportive "family". I am suggesting that more youth groups, particularly in the performing arts, might give more Indigenous children safe places to learn and practice the process of overcoming risks.

Comparing the Role of Culture

Young Native Fiddlers has had four primary teachers over the years. The first instructor taught one year, the second instructor taught two years and then moved out of state. The next teacher hired was a Suzuki teacher. The skills of the students improved with her tutelage during the six years she was with the program but there was little cultural connection. Members dressed in Native attire and sometimes performed at Native events but with the group being led by a non-Native person performing Western music, there was little connection to the Native community, particularly the adult musical community. During that time, few participants stayed in the program through junior high school. The exception was one student who joined as a sophomore and stayed two years. There was a good deal of turnover in the membership.

Bill Stevens became the lead instructor four years ago. As mentioned earlier, Bill is an Athabaskan elder who has played a fiddle in a traditional style since his early teens. In my conversations with Young Native Fiddlers members in the course of this project, I asked about being a member of the program before and after Bill became the lead instructor. Responses

focused on teaching style and power. There were a few comments indicating that although the music with the previous instructor was fun, they felt the instructor limited them too much, restricting them in lessons to learning only certain songs, and then playing those songs repeatedly in performances. They saw the music as lacking challenge because it didn't change. One student spoke about the performances, "I used to get nervous about them. But I didn't really get that nervous after the third one. There's nothing to it. Just play the same songs over and over". He no longer felt risk, but then he didn't learn much either. Another student spoke about Bill's contrasting style, "He doesn't hold us back or push us too far forward; he lets us go as we feel. And he helps us with songs. And when he's not [physically] helping us, he's showing us new ones and letting us listen and learn by ear".

Suzuki is a style of music instruction that trains young people well with a focus on tone. There is a different emphasis with Bill. First, the purpose is different. The music that Bill teaches continues a cultural practice, so it is not simply playing a song with a high-quality sound. Tradition is honored. It is playing a song that a grandfather played; it is keeping the tradition alive for future generations. Secondly, there is a strong feeling of community and connections. With the previous instructor, there was one instructor and many students. With Bill, they are a family of teachers and learners. With the previous instructor, power was positioned at the top with the instructor. With Bill, power is shared. The group belongs to the young fiddlers: it is their cultural music. Bill encourages members to learn a song on their own and then teach it to each other. He encourages the older children to work with the younger children. There was additional meaning to playing this music. One young fiddler said, "Oh, I like those... because those are like, traditional ones, and every once in a while, my grandparent knows one of them!"

Members like this music because it is theirs, they have a feeling of belonging in this musical family as well as their cultural family, and they are sharing their traditional music with their community. There are more opportunities to work through risk with their cultural music because they like the music and so they are playing it more. Asked about Bill's music, a member replied, "We play different music, music that we like to play or want to play". They are performing more for the public as well as jamming with each other. In becoming a close community of their own, they support each other through risk. Under the former instructor, as mentioned by a member, there ceased to be risk, thus offering fewer opportunities to develop resilience. I suggest that belonging to a community in which they can work together toward the goal of continuing their fiddling tradition - one in which they are encouraged to set their own goals, teach each other, and take pride in their culture. And one in which they are empowered by their traditional teacher and mentor will give these youth the ability to overcome obstacles in their path and seek new goals in the process.

Urban Native Youth, Cultural Continuity and Resilience

The community of Fairbanks, Alaska is an urban community with a population of approximately 30,000 people in the city and close to 100,000 people in the borough according to 2009 United States Census Bureau estimates. The Alaska Native population in the city is 9.9% and 6.6% being of mixed races. The Native population is a visible presence, particularly in the city. While many of the families in this project maintain rural ties, others have never been to or lived in the village of their family/ancestors. Whether or not they have village ties, these children live and go to school in a Western world for the most part.

Culture does not surround the youth in Fairbanks as it might in a village. As a result, the community must organize opportunities for youth to be surrounded by culture. As one parent in this study noted, families have to make an effort to seek out cultural opportunities. I would add that the community must also make an effort to provide them. The National Research Council - Institute of Medicine suggests that communities “should not just sit back and assume that their youth are being taken care of. They need to actively assess whether there are opportunities for all youth” (National Research Council – Institute of Medicine, 2002). That is why I recommend that in an urban area such as this, while perhaps not a traditional practice, culturally focused youth groups must be provided, as culturally focused arts groups have the potential to serve as a context for developing individual and community resilience. As mentioned in Chapter 3 when I discussed transmission of music, sometimes adjustments in practice need to be made in order to preserve and strengthen the culture. The Indigenous cultures in interior Alaska have rich heritages in a variety of art forms including weaving, carving, painting and beading as well as dance and music around which youth groups might be formed. Youth groups could be developed around other traditional activities as well.

Bringing a Non-Linear World to Resilience Research

Involving more Indigenous researchers in resilience research is indeed critical. However, as this project demonstrates, community-based participatory action research is also a valuable way in which to ensure the inclusion of a non-linear viewpoint. Chapter 2 describes this process. This case study involved a non-Indigenous researcher (myself) in a research project with Indigenous children, families, and community members. Hoare et al. write that participatory action research “relies on the experience of the people, it values the culture and it builds human

capacity within the community” (1993, p. 51). Community members become empowered through their involvement. For example, it was the parents who connected Bill Stevens to Young Native Fiddlers when the program was faltering. They knew their community and their traditions and envisioned the cultural significance that Bill could bring. Again, this was the turning point for the program as it not only survived and flourished, but became a site for developing individual and community cultural resilience. Another example is the decision-making of the leadership team. A primary goal of the leadership team each season (semester) is that the children have opportunities to enjoy their relationships with peers, community members and mentors so the team provides activities that not only do this but also provide opportunities for leadership, guided risk, and pride.

The participants in this project took the program past my limited Western view of music instruction and performance and integrated their Indigenous worldview and values. Respect, sharing and connecting to family and community became central to the project. While I, a non-Native person initiated the project, it became theirs; they are creating and sharing knowledge for their community’s well-being. They are developing individual and community cultural resilience in their own community.

Contributions to Cultural Resilience Theory

This is a case study illustrating the contributions that cultural involvement can make to developing culturally healthy individuals and communities. As noted by Fleming and Ledogar (2008), there are few empirical studies that do this. This study is also significant because it illustrates Richardson’s theory of resilient reintegration (Richardson, 2002). Performing in front of others demands that some risk be taken by these children. Richardson teaches that resilient

qualities can be strengthened when a person experiences growth as a result of disruption. In looking at the results of this study, I suggest that this program effects resilient reintegration. I also suggest that this study upholds the concept supported by Indigenous researchers, in particular, HeavyRunner and Morris (1997) that resilience is something innate and participation in one's culture can stimulate resilience.

Strengthening Youth through Culture

The experience of learning and performing their cultural music with their traditional Athabascan instructor and mentor is empowering to members of Young Native Fiddlers. They challenge themselves by working through risks, become connected with their culture, and develop leadership skills. As illustrated in Chapter 4, they have the opportunity to make connections across all four quadrants of one's being which is essential for well-being in Indigenous worldviews. Cultural resilience for them is not just being a part of the transmission of their cultural music but it is living their traditional cultural values, particularly respect, sharing, and seeing connections.

Youth Sharing With Community

The members of Young Native Fiddlers share their health and resilience, particularly in terms of leadership within their community. They share their cultural music in performance, as well as teach it to their community. They support community activities and through their hard work and perseverance provide a valuable service to their community in carrying on their musical traditions. Most importantly, looking at the present and the future, they contribute their own well-being and the continuation of cultural values which leads to community cultural resilience.

Community Nurturing Youth

The leadership team continues to nurture these youth respecting their evolving musical and leadership skills. They provide a musical family for them, ensuring that they have a safe place to challenge themselves and take risks that are a part of learning. They value the holistic being of the children, filling in missing elements for these youth when necessary (e.g. filling in as a parent in this musical family when a child, not their own, needs a parent and his or hers is unavailable). The leadership team is the community group that enables the development of individual cultural resilience and facilitates the integration of individual and community cultural resilience.

Recommendations

Continue to Strengthen Young Native Fiddlers

Every effort should be made to continue to develop Young Native Fiddlers. Considering that in this study, empowerment of children was referenced more than any other theme suggests that this is a significant opportunity for youth. Participation gives them a sense of power and a greater sense of confidence and self-esteem. Feeling empowered allows young people to take a chance at being criticized, and to stand up and commit: commit to music, commit to school and commit to their Nateness and identity.

Involvement in a participatory action research project also empowered adults on the leadership team to strengthen the community's children. They have the ability and the experience now to maintain this project as well as to ensure future development. Gaining experience tackling community needs such as music for their children and continuing the

Athabaskan fiddling tradition sets the stage for dealing with other community needs in a like manner.

Looking to the future of Young Native Fiddlers, two needs are vital. One is to consider inviting another Athabaskan fiddler to apprentice with Bill, thus ensuring continuity when Bill is unable to continue. Another is that more parents must make a commitment to assist in the operation of Young Native Fiddlers. There are countless hours of work involved in operating a program such as this. All parents need to assist in some manner.

Active Support of Young Native Fiddlers

Support from Community Musicians

There were times, as noted earlier in this paper, when parents did not feel support from the Native adult musicians in town so I am suggesting that a partnership needs to be developed. When I asked a parent if she thought Young Native Fiddlers could be a force for continuing the Athabaskan fiddling tradition she discussed the need for support from the Native adult music community,

If they don't do anything about [teaching] fiddling and passing it down, that's going to be lost because our elders who are actually the fiddlers, are quite up there in age. It is a tradition; it is part of the culture. Yet there is a big gap. I mean they have all of these celebrations and the elders are there and they're doing their fiddling but you don't really see the next generation, which would have been my generation, picking it up.

There are some but just not that many. And then the next generation, before we started the Young Native Fiddlers, there was almost no one until within about the last ten years. So I think with the [YNF] program, we are bringing awareness of the tradition to the next

generation [these children]. We need to support that, and try not to lose any more of our culture and traditions. We do need the Native community's support.

Financial Support

Financial support is critical to the continuation of Young Native Fiddlers. At its current size of forty young fiddlers, the cost is approximately \$25,000. each year. Funding is used to pay instructors for group and individual lessons. All other work is done by volunteers. We were fortunate to receive a sizeable three-year grant from the Elihu Foundation Charitable Trust, as well as support from the Fairbanks Arts Association bed tax regrant program, Doyon, Limited, (a local Native corporation) and contributions from local businesses in the past few years. These contributions have been critical for continuation of Young Native Fiddlers. However, without additional financial support, continuation of the program is at risk. The leadership team organized fall and spring fundraisers last year. It is a goal that in time, those fundraisers will fully support the program. Insufficient funding is always a concern.

Creation of Additional Community Youth Programs

A fifteen member committee of the National Research Council - Institute of Medicine conducted a two-year research project in which they studied current research on adolescent health and development and integrated it with research related to community programs for youth. They found little research identifying exactly how programs might facilitate child development or how to fine tune them to the needs of adolescents or diverse cultural groups. However, this is where a community based participatory action research group is needed so that programs might be developed that reflect community values. This committee did agree that there is a broad base of knowledge about child development that should be considered. They

wrote, “Youth develop positive personal and social assets in settings that have the following features:

- Physical and psychological safety and security;
- Structure that is developmentally appropriate, with clear expectations for behavior as well as increasing opportunities to make decisions, to participate in governance and rule-making, and to take on leadership roles as one matures and gains more expertise;
- Emotional and moral support;
- Opportunities for adolescents to experience supportive adult relationships;
- Opportunities to learn how to form close, durable human relationships with peers that support and reinforce healthy behavior;
- Opportunities to feel a sense of belonging and being valued;
- Opportunities to develop positive social values and norms;
- Opportunities for skill building and mastery;
- Opportunities to develop confidence in one’s abilities to master one’s environment;
- Opportunities to make a contribution to one’s community and to develop a sense of mattering; and
- Strong links between families, schools and broader community resources” (National Research Council – Institute of Medicine, 2002, pp. 301-302).

The committee adds that the more these elements are part of a youth program, the better the program supports positive youth development. These community programs can expand opportunities for children to “acquire personal and social assets and to experience the broad range of features of positive developmental settings” (National Research Council –

Institute of Medicine, 2002, p.302). Parents of young fiddlers, especially those of the advanced group, would likely agree that YNF incorporates many of these elements. However, not every child has a passion for music. There needs to be a variety of youth programs for Alaska Native children. One of the recommendations of this committee is that communities develop a variety of youth programs and that they do so through local entities that have the ability to coordinate such a program for the community (National Research Council- Institute of Medicine, 2002).

Future Research

I propose that this project should be followed-up by two studies. One would be a quantitative study examining these children in terms of academics using school district measures such as grades, test scores and high school completion, and age of starting in Young Native Fiddlers, length of time in the program and involvement of the parent/s.

The other research I would like to see is a continuation of this project as a longitudinal study, following life events of members of Young Native Fiddlers starting in high school such as honors, high school graduation, college, incarceration, contribution to community, etc. This would add depth to the present project and perhaps a more prescriptive function to participation in the program.

Conclusion

Music has enabled these young fiddlers to experience the physical, mental-emotional, spiritual and contextual aspects of their world. In fulfillment of Villegas and Prieto's recommendations for reaching full potential, music has led the children to knowledge of their own competence as well giving them a start in understanding their responsibility to contribute to the well-being of their community. The process of leading this program of cultural music for

their children has enabled the leadership team to seek solutions for community needs. It is imperative in this urban Native population that the Native community will continue this program which offers youth the opportunity, through involvement in their cultural music practices, to develop their resilience, and share their strengths with their cultural community.

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