

Poarch Creek Indian Parents' Perceptions of Schools

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ABSTRACT

KARLA MARTIN: Poarch Creek Indian Parents' Perceptions of Schools
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This study examines Poarch Creek Indian parents' perceptions of 1) education quality, 2) parent involvement, 3) Indian culture, and 4) suggestions. This study was designed with the tribe's education director to help address the educational needs of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. Through 79 parent surveys and six individual interviews with parents, perceptions were recorded and analyzed to better understand parents' feelings about their child(ren)'s school. Overall parents were very pleased with the quality of education that the schools provide. Parents reported to be involved with their child's education at home and school. However, parents had mixed feelings about how schools are teaching Indian culture and history. Parents also had suggestions for ways that schools and the tribe can help to improve education. All of this information has been compiled, analyzed, and written into an easily accessible report for parents, community members, and tribal leaders.

PREFACE

Poarch Creek Indian parents' perceptions of schools has not currently been documented, therefore this information has been requested by parents and tribal leaders. After this study was designed and in the implementation phase, the results were requested as part of the tribe's five-year strategic plan, by the education committee, and by parents that completed surveys and interviews. This report is written in language for this particular audience. The education level of this audience ranges from some high school to graduate and professional degrees; therefore, this document was written so that it is easily accessible for all. Plans are that this report will be given to the tribal council and education committee and the complete report will be uploaded on the tribe's website and used to facilitate discussion between parents, the tribe, and schools.

The purpose of this study is to examine Poarch Creek Indian parents' perceptions of 1) education quality, 2) parent involvement, 3) Indian culture, and 4) suggestions. This study was designed with the tribe's education director to help address the educational needs of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. This was a mixed methodology study comprised of surveys and semi-structured interviews. The participants were parents of tribal members or 1st generation descent students in Kindergarten through 12th grades. The data gathered consisted of 79 surveys and six interviews with parents. Parents' perceptions were recorded, coded, and analyzed to better understand how they feel about schools.

Overall parents were very pleased with the quality of education that the schools are providing. Parents reported to be involved with their child's education at home and school.

However, parents had mixed feelings about how schools are teaching about Indian culture and history. Parents also had suggestions for ways that schools and the tribe can help to improve education.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview of Study:

This report examines Poarch Creek Indian parents' perceptions of schools. Parents with tribal members and 1st generation descent students in Kindergarten- 12th grades were interviewed and surveyed. Seventy-nine surveys and six interviews were collected and analyzed.

Parents' Perceptions:

Positives

1. Education Quality:

- Schools 1) value their input, 2) expect Indian children to do well academically and behave well, 3) treat Indian children, parents, and the community with respect, 4) seek parental support, guidance, and assistance, 5) are very welcoming and helpful, and 6) inform parents of ways to get involved and events at school.

2. Parent Involvement:

- Parents reported very high parent involvement.
- At school, parents reported to be volunteers with field trips, activities, classroom parties, special events, attending PTA/PTO meetings, meeting with teachers, and attending sporting events.

- At home, parents reported involvement in helping with homework, studying, and getting extra help. In addition, parents reported to be involved with extracurricular activities, church activities, and sports games and practices.

3. Indian Culture:

- Although parents think that schools do not understand or value Indian culture, they are optimistic that schools would be open to learning and including Indian culture.

Concerns

1. Education Quality:

- Schools 1) focus too much on standardized test scores, 2) do not make them aware of available resources, 3) treat Indian boys differently, 4) are only after money from the tribe, 5) do not teach diversity and cultural sensitivity, and 6) do not prepare students for transition from elementary school to middle school.
- Teachers 1) are not willing to help all students, struggling students, and students with disabilities and 2) do not communicate with parents.

2. Parent Involvement:

- Parents' reasons for not volunteering were because of work, not being wanted, and teacher's attitudes that parents don't care.

3. Indian Culture:

- Parents were concerned about 1) educating our children, 2) educating the schools, teachers, and staff, and 3) increasing cultural awareness for other students, schools, and areas.

- Some parents felt that the schools discriminate against Indian children.
- At school, students are not learning about Native Americans, the tribe, or Indian culture.
- Most parents did not know if there was an aide, what the aide does, and if they help their child(ren).

4. Tribe:

- Students attending schools in town, out of the county, and out of the state are not informed, assisted with education, or treated fairly.

5. Demographic Patterns:

- Parents of students in secondary grades and with higher SES were less satisfied with aspects of school's quality, treatment, and communication.
- Married parents, private schools, and parents with a higher education level were less satisfied or less involved in their child(ren)'s education.
- Parents of females were less informed by the teachers and school and less involved with their child(ren)'s education.

Parents' Suggestions:

1. Education Quality:

- Offer special education services, extra help, and one-on-one attention for struggling students and students with disabilities.
- Offer more challenging activities for advanced students.
- Make students aware of options after graduation for college and training programs.

2. Indian Culture:

- More cultural awareness and education for non-native students, teachers, staff, and communities.
- The tribe should provide schools with teaching materials about Creek history.
- Schools offer Indian history, culture, or language classes.

3. Tribe:

- Build a tribal school
- Aid 1st generation with college funding.
- Be more involved with the middle and high school students.
- Build better relationships with ALL schools that tribal member and Indian descent children attend.
- Contact schools systems when tribal members enroll.
- Offer additional education during summer and after school programs.
- Work with CIE and PCI gaming to look at possibilities of training for jobs.

Conclusions:

Overall parents had positive comments about schools. Because survey responses were positive and interview responses were mixed, I question whether these findings are a true representation of how parents view schools and the education their child is receiving. I propose that this information and questions raised by parents be discussed amongst each other and then with the schools to assure that our children receive the “best” education possible.

Proposed Questions for Discussion:

1. How would you propose to include Indian culture, history, and/or language into schools?
 - What information should be taught? How?
 - Would you want a non-Indian teaching this information?
 - Should parents, community members, the tribe, or schools teach this information?
 - How can the tribe and school work together to get materials and resources to schools in teaching about Native Americans and the tribe?
2. What are parents and schools expectations about communication between teachers and schools?
3. Given the discussion above, is there a role for a tribal school? What role?

INTRODUCTION

There is a long history of concern with interaction between parents and schools, in particular with minority parents. As well, Native Americans have a long history of the government using education as a method to assimilate them into the dominant society.

This report is the result of a study conducted for my Masters Thesis project. The purpose of this study is to examine Poarch Creek Indian parents' perceptions of 1) education quality, 2) parent involvement, 3) Indian culture, and 4) suggestions. This report will be shared with the tribe and parents with the intention of calling attention to the strengths and weaknesses in our children's education and using this information as a tool for providing them with the best education.

Before explaining the data collected and the parents' perceptions, it is important to understand a little about the context of the county and schools that most tribal members attend, programs and services provided by the schools and tribe for education and how these programs are funded. Next, a brief history of Indian education and parent involvement will give some background information to better understand the relationships that Native Americans have had with the government and schools and concerning education and parent involvement.

Description of the Tribe and School System

The Poarch Band of Creek Indians was federally recognized in 1984 as a sovereign nation. The reservation is located in Escambia County, Alabama, eight miles northwest of

Atmore, Alabama. As of 2006, there are 2,340 tribal members and approximately 1,000 live in the vicinity of Poarch, Alabama (Poarch Band of Creek Indians, 2005).

Escambia County is located in the southern part of Alabama, sharing its southern border with Florida. As of 2000, the population of Escambia County was 38,440. The racial demographics of the county are 64.40% White, 30.79% Black or African American, 3.01% Native American, 0.24% Asian, 0.03% Pacific Islander, 0.40% from other races, and 1.13% from two or more races (Wikipedia, 2008). In Escambia County, the median income for a household was \$28,319 and for a family was \$36,086. About 20.90% of the population in the county was below the poverty line (Wikipedia).

In 2000, the largest city in the county was Atmore with 7,676 people. The racial makeup of the city is somewhat different from the county makeup. Atmore is 49.48% White, 46.31% Black or African American, 2.41% Native American, 0.47% Asian, 0.05% Pacific Islander, 0.36% from other races, and .91% from two or more races (Wikipedia, 2008). The median income for a household in the city was \$22,867, and the median income for a family was \$29,813. In Atmore, about 23.9% of the population was below the poverty line” (Wikipedia).

The Escambia County School System is the district and Atmore, Alabama is the city where the majority of tribal children attend school. In the Escambia County School district there are 14 schools, 304 teachers, and 4,722 students (SchoolTree.org, 2000). There are five elementary schools, two middle schools, one junior high school, three high schools, one alternative school, one technical school, and one environmental science center. In Atmore there are three elementary schools, one middle school, and four private/parochial schools. All three elementary schools and the middle school are school-wide Title I schools

(SchoolTree.org). In 2000, Atmore had an estimate of 2,229 students attending public schools and 440 students in private/parochial schools (Escambia County IDA). Of those students, 238 were reported to be Native American. (SchoolTree.org)

Programs, Services, and Funding

Through government funds, grants, and gaming revenue, there are currently many education programs, support systems, and services offered to Poarch Creek Indian children. The Bureau of Indian Affairs pays for Adult Education which includes basic Adult Education & GED classes. Another program funded by BIA through the Johnson O'Malley program, is for afterschool tutoring and provides funds for the tutors for that program. The tribe's Basic Library & Library Enhancement are funded by the Institute of Museum & Library Services. This includes paying for books, subscriptions, equipment, and a portion of the Library Clerk's salary, for the library. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program is funded by the Department of Labor. This pays for training and staff salary to help qualified Native Americans to find employment or retain employment. Part of the Summer WIA program is funded through this and the other part is tribally funded. The Summer Youth Prevention Program is a grant program from the Department of Justice that is funded through the tribe by a variety of departments: housing, law enforcement, and education. Title VII is funded by the Department of Education. One hundred percent of Title VII funds go to county public schools for materials and/or equipment to assist with Indian education.

With revenue from gaming, our tribe is increasing education programs and services offered to tribal members. The programs that are 100% tribally funded are the Tribal Youth Council, Pow Wow Club, Fred L. McGhee Early Learning Center, and the Tuition

Assistance Scholarship Program-- which gives all tribal members ages 10 and up an allotment of \$30,000 to attend school or pay off student loans.

Brief History of Indian Education

Since the beginning of Native American¹ Education, the main goal of the government has been to assimilate Indians into the white way of life, destroying their culture, language, and beliefs. When looking at this history, many scholars, including Grande (2004) categorize Indian education into three eras:

(1) the period of missionary domination, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries; (2) the period of federal government domination from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century; and, (3) the period of self-determination from the mid-twentieth century to the present. (p. 12)

Throughout these eras, Indian education has been an ongoing struggle for power between Native Americans and the government. Many of the government's efforts have been attempts to "kill the Indian and save the man" (Reyhner & Eder, 2004, p.108).

Non-Indian control of Indian education began with missionaries. They developed full-service educational systems with the goal of "de-Indianizing" Native children (Grande, 2004). In the early 1800's, Thomas McKenny fought for a national school system for the Indians. His goal was to turn the Indians toward agriculture, which he believed would lead to ownership of private property, hard work, and the development of Christian communities (Prucha, 1986). McKenny was successful in getting funds and worked with tribes to get their

¹ Throughout this article, the terms Indian, Native American, and American Indian will all be used interchangeably. Different scholars have their opinions about the appropriate term that describes this group. Therefore I will not change the term that they use. I will say that I refer to this group of people as Indians, for the reason that I am a member of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians and have been referred to as an Indian all of my life. I know that the term Indian was given to my people by the white man. However, Indian has always been what I call myself and I do with a source of pride and full understanding of the history of the term.

consent on the instructors teaching their children. However, the factory system was discontinued by Congress in 1822 because of the conflict with private businesses. (Reyhner & Eder, 2004).

The implementation of Indian schools did not serve the purpose of tribal civilization and Christianization that the government hoped for because of the small number of schools and Indian children being educated, therefore the tribes were not greatly affected (Prucha, 1986). Subsequently, manual labor schools were established, with the first at the Methodist Shawnee mission in eastern Kansas in 1839 serving as a model for all manual labor schools. The goal of manual labor schools was to civilize the Indians in Indian Country, by teaching them agricultural and domestic skills as well as English (Prucha). The overall goal was to completely integrate Indians into white society, through isolation and segregation from their tribes. During this period of missionary domination, the church and state worked together to advance white supremacy (Grande, 2004).

The period of federal government domination began with the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830 and lasted until the mid-twentieth century (Grande, 2004). After the government forced tribes to move west of the Mississippi, they concentrated on the civilization and Christianization of the Indians (Prucha, 1986). The Carlisle Indian Industrial School (1879-1918) was the first educational institution in the period of federal control and many considered it a model of what could be done to transform Indians (Prucha). Using this model, many boarding schools were built and designed to be an assimilation method that separated children from all that was familiar: family, tribe, language, traditions, and identity. The government felt that this way students would be forced from their homes to live in a place both “geographically and ideologically foreign” (Child, 1998). The curriculum in these

schools taught allegiance to the United States banned Native American languages, customs, and religions from schools. In 1906, the government established a new plan for assimilation that placed Indian students into public schools. They felt this was the easiest way to train Indians to think white. By 1912 there were more Indians in public schools than government (BIA) schools (Grande).

The Meriam Report in 1928 revealed many of the problems that Indians had been complaining about for years. The report exposed the poor quality education services that Indian students were receiving in boarding schools: malnutrition, illness, terrible sleeping conditions and facilities, harsh military punishment, overworked students, insufficient clothing, and overcrowded schools, just to highlight a few (Child, 1998). The report stated that quality teachers and schools along with strong “Indian family and social structure was the answer” (National Indian Education Association [NIEA], 2003). As a result of the Meriam Report, many Indian boarding schools were closed or converted to day schools between 1928 and 1933 (Child).

The idea of Indian control of Indian education is not a new one. The Cherokee and Choctaw tribes have operated successful schools since the nineteenth century (Tippeconnic, 1999). However, the movement toward Indian control of education began in the 1960s. The establishment of Rough Rock Demonstration School in 1966 on the Navajo reservation was the first time an all Indian elected school board had complete control of a school (Tippeconnic). In 1969, the Kennedy Report recommended an increase in Indian control over education and the creation of a National Indian Board of Education (NIEA, 2003). In 1972, the Indian Education Act provided funding for culturally related academic needs of Indian students in public schools (Tippeconnic). In 1975, the Indian Self-Determination and

Education Assistance Act intended to establish Indian control over education (Reyhner & Eder, 2004). In 1994, Indian Education was reauthorized as Title IX Part A of ESEA, and then in 2001, Indian education was reauthorized again as Title VII Part A of the No Child Left Behind Act (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education [OESE], 2005).

It is important to recognize that some progress has been made in Indian education. In earlier years, parents had not been allowed to participate in their children's education. The Indian Education Act, Johnson O'Malley, Title IX or VII, Title I, and many more have required Indian parent involvement for schools that use the funds (OESE, 2005; Reyhner & Eder, 2004; Tippeconnic, 1999). So there has been a shift from parent exclusion to parent inclusion in education. In October 1990, the Native American Languages Act was passed to help ensure the survival of Native American languages and cultures and to ensure that Native Americans language is not restricted (Reyhner & Eder). This is definitely and a reverse of what the government was previously doing with boarding schools. According to Beaulieu (2000) in 1991 the Nation's At-Risk Task Force evaluated American Indian education for the first times since the 1972 Indian Education Act. Progress in the overall educational level of Indians was reported and attributed to the participation of adults in adult education programs (Beaulieu). Though Indian education has progressed over time, there is not much documented on its progression.

“Indian students, in comparison to all others, are still the most disproportionately affected by poverty, low educational attainment, and limited access to educational opportunities” (Grande, 2004, p. 18). And even though many studies over the years have found that the best education for Indian children is community based Indian controlled

education, today 90% of American Indian students attend public schools (Tippeconnic, 1999).

Freeman & Fox (2005) found that Native American/Alaska Native students are more likely to have dropped out of school than White or Asian/Pacific Islander youth and young adults. In 2003, the drop-out rate was 15% for American Indians/Alaska Natives, compared to 11% for blacks, 6% for whites, and 4% for Asian/Pacific Islanders. This has fueled tribes to take control over the education of their children (Freeman & Fox).

From early childhood to graduate school, tribes have been developing systems of education that they control. In 2003-04, the BIA funded 184 schools that served approximately 46,000 American Indian/Alaskan Native students. Of these 184 schools, 64 were BIA-operated and the remaining 120 schools were operated by tribes, under BIA contracts or grants (Freeman & Fox, 2005; Rehyner & Eder, 2004). Tippeconnic (1999) argues that the most significant education system for Indians today is Indian community controlled schools. What is important about these schools is that they are restoring self image and interest in learning, lowering the drop-out rate, restoring responsibility and discipline, and building confidence in Native American students (Tippeconnic). Since Indian influence in Indian Education is increasing, it is imperative that Indian education never returns to being a subtractive process of cultural assimilation that destroys Indian knowledge and beliefs in order for Indians to be accepted in the wider white society (Rehyner & Eder).

Parent Involvement

While there is little research about parental involvement of Native Americans, there is considerable research about parental involvement more generally. Research shows that

parents are not involved in their children's education because of work schedules, fear of authority-based institutions, negative education experiences, cultural differences, economic conditions, health, family problems, parent illiteracy, job-related issues, scheduling problems, and parent's frustrations with schools (Plevyak, 2003). While laws now require parent participation, which is different from the previous generation, parents might not understand their roles and expectations in this new view of Indian education (Jacobi, Witterich, & Hogue, 2003).

Research suggests that some ways to improve parental involvement include creating partnerships with parents, joint-planning and goal setting, providing parental support systems, allowing parents to serve on school committees, and doing things the parents feel are important (Jacobi et al., 2003; Plevyak, 2003). Research also suggests that offering parental education programs such as computer classes and/or GED classes would improve parental involvement (Benson & Martin, 2003; Plevyak). Further, sending materials home with the parents that they can do with their child(ren) will give parents ways to help at home (Benson & Martin, 2003). Additional ideas for increasing parent involvement are to increase communication through PTA/PTO meetings, parent newsletters, Parent Teacher Conferences, and phone calls (Benson & Martin; Jacobi et al.; Plevyak). Other suggestions include: creating a positive-warm environment so that the parents feel comfortable, and holding special programs, events, field trips, and visitation/observation days for parents to attend (Benson & Martin; Jacobi et al.; Plevyak).

There is not much literature on Native American parental involvement; however one study conducted by Robinson-Zanartu & Majel-Dixon (1996) focused on 234 parents and community members of 55 tribes predominately from central and western regions of the

country. This study's goal was to gain their attitudes about education, satisfaction with schools, the degree to which schools value Indian culture, their involvement with schools, and school expectations for their children. The study found that parents considered themselves an important in their child's education, interested in education, and wanted to be involved. The parents strongly disagreed with many things done in the public and BIA or boarding schools. Parents and community members were very satisfied with tribally controlled schools. The major difference being that tribally controlled schools were valuing, understanding, and incorporating Indian culture. This study inspired my research for this report.

THIS STUDY

There is very little research done on Native American parent involvement and because it is pertinent to the academic success of students, it is important for this study and others like it to be done. The purpose of this study is to examine Poarch Creek Indian parents' perceptions of 1) education quality, 2) parent involvement, 3) Indian culture, and 4) suggestions. This study looks at how parents discuss their thoughts on the public and private schools that their child(ren) attend.

In the remainder of this report, I will discuss: 1) research procedures, 2) findings, and 3) summaries and conclusions. I will discuss parent's responses from surveys and interviews to determine if there are patterns to consider.

Research Procedures

This study used both questionnaires and interviews.² (See Appendix A for questionnaire and Appendix B for interview guide.) The participants are parents of tribal members³ and 1st generation descent⁴ with children in Kindergarten-12th grade. My reason for choosing to survey and interview these parents was because the range of funding for different grants in school can be from tribal member to 2nd generation, depending on the type of funding. That is to say, all programs serve tribal member but the generation of descendent

² This study was designed to be a mixed methodology study that used a quantitative survey and qualitative semi-structured interviews to collect data.

³ A tribal member is a person that meets the minimum qualifications of having ¼ blood quantum and is on the Poarch Band of Creek Indian tribal roll.

⁴ 1st generation descent is a person that has a biological parent that is a member of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, but they do not meet the ¼ blood quantum.

included depends on each particular program/grant and the specifications under those.

Therefore, I have chosen to survey parents of students that are both tribal members and 1st generation descent.

This study was not feasible to conduct using random sampling, so I used sample of convenience. The tribe's education director, tribal administrator, and I decided that the most cost effective and accessible way to collect data would be by placing surveys in each of the children's folders at the summer youth program and also distributing surveys to Workforce Investment Act (WIA) participants and the tribal youth council. This cumulative effort targeted children in grades K-12. In addition, I set up two booths on Tribal Election Day on the 1st weekend of June 2007 to distribute and collect surveys. One booth was set up in conjunction with the Tribal Education Department's booth and the other was set up at a very large family reunion held on that day⁵. People were asked to complete only one survey for each of their children. For each survey completed, the parent received a raffle ticket for a chance to win one of five \$20 Wal-Mart gift cards.

Surveys were anonymous because I wanted parents to feel like they could give their honest opinion, without being identified. Surveys consisted of five parts. An explanation letter/consent form was attached to the survey. If the parent/guardian returned the survey, that was regarded as implied consent. Part I asked the parents to indicate whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with questions about the following: 1) satisfaction with their child's education; 2) how the school treats and values Indian culture, children, parents, and the community; and 3) the school's openness to learn and include Indian culture. Part II asked parents to list: 1) the number of times that they have volunteered

⁵ Tribal Election Day is a large event that many people come home for, so this is the perfect place to get a variety of participants. Also, most of the booths give away free things so there are many people walking around to each of the booths collecting things.

with the school and 2) how many times the school has communicated with them, in the past year. Part III consisted of two open-ended questions that provided parents with a chance to make any suggestions for ways they feel the school and/or tribe can help improve their child's education. Part IV provided a place for parents to complete demographic information. Part V, the last page of the survey, was a volunteer sheet for parents to sign if they would like to participate in an interview. On this page, parents were asked to provide their name, phone number and/or e-mail address, and instructed to tear off this page so that it was separate from the survey and either place it in the box or give it to me. A drop box was placed at the sign in counter during the summer youth program and checked each day and a drop box was placed at each of the booths. A total of seventy-nine surveys were returned.

Of the 20 people that volunteered for an interview, I chose six interview participants. I did this by dividing the volunteers into two groups: 1) parent of a tribal member, and 2) and parent of a 1st Generation descendant. After getting the two groups of parents, I randomly selected participants from each group to interview. However, because it was difficult to get in touch with and schedule interviews with participants, only six interviews were conducted, three from each group. The interviews consisted of three main questions that were designed to elicit parent's opinions about how the school treats Poarch Creek Indian culture, how parents are involved in their child(ren)'s education, and how the school addresses Indian children. The six interviews were done either in person, by phone, or via e-mail. To protect the participant's confidentiality, all interviewee's names were replaced with pseudonyms. Additional information was provided by the tribe's education department.

For this report, I first analyzed survey data descriptively for each item. Next, I constructed frequency tables to look at the number of responses for each question to see how

many parents strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, and disagreed with each question, noting the number (n) and percentage. Then I grouped the strongly agreed and agreed responses together and the strongly disagreed and disagreed responses together to more clearly divide the responses into agree and disagree. Because many things can affect one's perceptions, one way to have a better understanding of who among the parents indicated what, is to look at any differences based on background information: child's gender, grade, school, residence, rank amongst their siblings, tribal member or 1st generation descendant, and the parent's socioeconomic status, marital status, and education level. Using the statistical software SPSS, I then created tables to see how parents' responses varied in terms of their background information: socioeconomic status, residence, mother's education level, father's education level, and marital status. I did the same with the child's information: gender, elementary or secondary grades, tribal member or first generation descent, child rank, and public or private school. I then computed any correlations between each of the demographic questions and each of the other questions. This was done to determine if there were any differences in which group of parents was saying what information. I computed gammas and the level of significance to determine if there were systematic differences. Only the statistically significant differences are reported. (See Appendix C: Gammas and Level of Significance.)

Interviews, as well as the open ended responses from surveys were typed verbatim and examined for themes. In this, I read the transcripts and noted what each sentence and paragraph was addressing. Quotes that represented the key themes were included in the data analysis.

This study is important to both me and the tribe for many reasons. As a graduate student and researcher at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill I began thinking

about the thesis project that I would conduct. Reflecting on the past five summers of my work with the tribe's Summer Youth Prevention Program, I began to think about the positive and negative remarks made about the schools that these students attend. With my education background and knowledge, some of the comments really concerned me. I knew from experiences in other schools systems that these were important issues that needed to be investigated and addressed. It also seemed that some schools worked particularly well and others less so. I was very curious as to the differences and specifically what makes some schools successful and/or others not successful. I wanted to see what the parents thought more generally about these issues. I have come to feel that there are some issues that need to be named and addressed because they are affecting our children's education. I believe the place to start is with the parents. My goal is to help parents share their views with each other, with the tribe, and with school district officials. I know that this study is just a beginning but hope that it will accurately depict parents' opinions of what is going on in schools. This report will highlight areas of strength but also the questions and concerns of the parents. My intention for this project and report is not to speak negatively about one school or system, but to call attention to improvements that could be made and discuss suggestions that parents have for schools. The one common goal of the tribe, parents, and school system is to provide a "good" education for our children, and I hope that this project will help in doing this.

FINDINGS

I. Background Information

Seventy-nine people completed the surveys (N=79) and six people were interviewed. As part of the surveys, parents were asked to complete background information about them and their child at the beginning. The findings from this are reported in tables 1, 2, and 3. For each group, both the number (n) of people in that category and the percent are listed.

Table 1: Background Information

Background Information	n	percent
Gender of child		
Male	37	47%
Female	42	53%
Grade		
Elementary (K-5)	49	63%
Secondary (6-12)	29	37%
TM or 1st generation		
Tribal Member	41	53%
1 st generation descent	37	47%
School Identified Race		
Native American	62	89%
Other	8	11%
SES		
Free and Reduced	32	42%
Regular	44	58%

Residence		
Alabama	70	90%
Other	8	10%
Marital Status		
Married	53	75%
Other	18	25%
Mother's Education		
Some HS +HS Diploma/ GED	43	61%
Some College +	28	39%
Father's Education		
Some HS +HS Diploma/ GED	41	59%
Some College +	29	41%
Child rank		
Only	8	11%
Youngest	28	38%
A Middle	10	14%
Oldest	27	37%
Type of School		
Public	59	76%
Private	17	22%
Homeschool	2	2%

In Table 1, the survey respondents indicated that 47% of their children were male and 53% of their children were female, divided almost evenly between the two genders. Because all school systems are separated differently by grade, I chose to label K-5 as elementary grades and 6-12 as secondary grades. Of the students represented, 63% are in Elementary and 37% are in Secondary grades. The grades of students reported on by the parents ranged from kindergarten to 12th grade. The highest percentage of students was in 4th-grade (14%), 3rd-grade (13%), kindergarten (12%), and 9th-grade (10%), all other grades ranged from 2% to 9% of the total respondents. The number of parents surveyed who had children that are

tribal members was 53% and children that are 1st generation descent was 47%, almost evenly split between the two. Of these children, parents said that at school 89% of the students are identified as Native American and 11% as other.

The surveys also gave us more information about the parents. The socioeconomic status (SES) was indicated by the child's lunch status: free, reduced, and regular lunch. Forty-two percent of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch and 58% qualify for regular lunch. The majority of parents lived in Alabama (90%) with 10% of parents that responded living in other states. Seventy-five percent of the parents stated that they are married and the other 25% indicated they are either divorced, separated, widowed, or single. When looking at parents' education level, the majority had either some high school or a high school diploma/GED, with mothers being at 61% and fathers at 59%.

The parents completed the survey in regards to one of their children. The majority of the children the parents addressed were either the youngest (38%) or the oldest (37%) child in their family. The majority of the students represented attended public school (76%). The other students attended private school (22%) and two (2%) were homeschooled. Because homeschool students are such a small portion of the total students, we cannot analyze them as a separate group.

Census data from the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs (2005) is used to show how the population of the Poarch Creek Indian parents that were surveyed and interviewed is similar to the population of the tribe. From Census information and the information that I gathered through surveys, the only background information that can be compared is education level. Though the surveys were anonymous, questions asking about

background information were on the surveys and allow us to see the overall group represented by these responses.

Census data shows that the education levels for individuals over 18 is 65% ranging from an eighth grade education to high school graduates/GED and 35% have some college or a college degree. These statistics show no significant difference in gender of education level. In comparing this information to the survey demographics it is evident that the education level of the parents who completed the surveys is very similar to the total census population of the tribe. Out of the 141 parents represented (71 mothers and 70 fathers) in the surveys, 60% have some high school, a high school diploma, or GED. Forty percent of these parents have some college or a college education.

II. Education Quality

When describing education, parents discussed 1) schools in terms of quality, satisfaction, values, input, expectations, and treatment of Indian children, parents, and the community; 2) the comparison of public and private schools; 3) teachers; and 4) communication. As seen in Tables 2 and 3, parents had very positive things to say about the quality, satisfaction, expectations, and treatment from the schools. In interviews with parents, the information shared was both positive and negative relating to schools, teachers, treatment, and communication.

Schools

A strong majority, over 88% in each category, agreed that the school provides a quality education and are satisfied with the education their child is receiving. Similarly these

parents agreed that schools value their input, expect Indian children to do well academically and to behave well, and treat Indian children, parents, and the community with respect. The open ended survey responses revealed that parents felt their children attend good schools. However, they requested more one-on-one attention, up-to-date facilities, and challenging activities for smarter students. Parents explained that the school expects academic excellence and good behavior from all students and seeks parental support, guidance, and assistance.

Parents who disagreed on these questions were concerned that schools focus too much on standardized test scores, therefore other things are ignored. Other concerns were that the students in public school were behind the students in private school. Parents felt that the schools could do a better job with the education that is offered.

Parents discussed how the tribe being partnered with the school really helps in the way that the students, parents, and the community are treated. One parent explained, “I think our school and tribe have an excellent relationship as is. They really strive to make the best environment for our children to learn in. Being "Indian" is a positive and it is strongly encouraged for the kids to be proud of their ethnicity.” Parents recognized that the tribe is very involved in the surrounding schools and feel that the schools have a great understanding of the community and are very community oriented. For the students that live out of state, there is no tribal community for the schools to address.

Table 2: Parents Opinions of the Quality of Education

Question	SA	A	D	SD	Total (n)
1. Provides a quality education.	53% (42)	41% (32)	3% (2)	3% (2)	78
2. Satisfied with child's education.	51% (40)	38% (30)	9% (7)	2% (2)	79
7. Values my input.	45% (35)	47% (37)	5% (4)	3% (2)	78
8. Expects Indian children to do well academically.	38% (27)	53% (38)	5% (4)	4% (3)	72
9. Expects Indian children to behave well.	39% (28)	53% (38)	4% (3)	4% (3)	72
10. Treats Indian children with respect.	44% (34)	41% (32)	10% (8)	5% (4)	78
11. Treats Indian parents with respect.	45% (34)	43% (33)	8% (6)	4% (3)	76
12. Treats the Indian community with respect.	39% (30)	49% (37)	8% (6)	4% (3)	76

Note. The highlighted areas indicate the highest percent for each question.

Table 3: Education Quality: Summary of Agree and Disagree by Questions in Table 2

	1	2	7	8	9	10	11	12
Strongly Agree (SA) + Agree (A)	94% (74)	89% (70)	92% (72)	91% (65)	92% (66)	85% (66)	88% (67)	88% (67)
Disagree (D) + Strongly Disagree (SD)	6% (4)	11% (9)	8% (6)	9% (7)	8% (6)	15% (12)	12% (9)	12% (9)

The surveys responses in Table 2 and the summary of those responses in Table 3 show that a strong majority agree that schools provide a quality of education for their children. However, there was a significant distinction between some groups of parents' responses. For questions 1, 2, 7, and 12, parents' responses were divided by SES. Parents with a higher SES less strongly agreed that the school provides a quality education, are not as

satisfied with the education that their child is receiving, values their input, and treats the Indian community with respect. The responses from question seven differed both by SES and elementary or secondary grades. Parents with children in secondary grades less strongly agreed that the school values their input. It is interesting that for both questions eight and nine parents of males more strongly agreed that the schools expect Indian children to do well academically and behave well. Also, parents of older children more strongly agreed that they are expected to behave well, and that older and middle children are treated with more respect. It is also interesting that parents less strongly agreed that secondary schools treated Indian children, parents, and the community with respect.

Through interviews with parents I found a variety of opinions about schools. On the positive side, parents explained that the school, teachers, and staff are very welcoming, helpful, caring, and concerned. The negatives seen were that parents are not made aware of resources available, Indian boys are judged and treated differently, and that the schools are after money from the tribe. Another negative aspect of schools that a parent pointed out is that,

Schools don't teach diversity and cultural sensitivity. Instead they act like everybody's the same. They make them that way. Everybody has different backgrounds, ways of thinking, different religions. They try to produce a product. They try to mainstream everybody. They don't encourage individuality. They act like diversity doesn't exist and just ignore it.

Parents of students with children in middle school shared concerns of their child's grades dropping from elementary to middle school. "My child has always made A/B honor roll and when she came to the middle school her grades dropped. Everyone I talk to said the same thing." Though parents reported that they are involved in the elementary and secondary grades, one parent explained that the involvement level changes "when the rules change in

middle school, then, the activities change, then, the child changes (opposite sex, hormones, clothing matters, etc.).”

Parents suggested that the school offer Indian history, culture, or language classes; increase education standards; provide more challenging activities; make students aware of options for training and school after graduation; and expose students to career fields. Many parents were concerned about the help being provided to students with learning disabilities and struggling students. One parent stated that “the school staff needs to be more aware and understanding of children with learning disabilities. Make a greater effort to work with the child and the parent to help the child reach his or her full potential.” Other parents suggested more one-on-one attention for those with learning disabilities and special education services for those children in need.

Public vs. Private

I said I would never send my kids to a private school, I said I would never do that. But when you have public schools that are on academic alert, and my child came to me and said momma I don't want to go to the private school, you know I don't. But she said I am sick of this school. The teachers spend 10-15 minutes of our class time trying to get order in the class before we start beginning to learn. ~ A Parent

In the interview and survey responses, parents from both public and private schools often compared the two. Parents explain that at the private school their child's academic attitude changed and students have more opportunities. Others see the curriculum harder than that in the public school system. One parent explained that her children in public schools are academically behind those in the same grade at the private school. The negatives that parents discussed about the private schools are that it is too expensive; Indian children are treated differently; they do not provide transportation; and the “environment and mentality” of other

parents is not accepting of Indian children. One parent explained that there are some parents who are very supportive of Indian children; however what bothered her was the way that other parents were judgmental and talked negatively about Indians. This parent explained how difficult it is when people in the school ask for the tribe's help.

It's almost like I just don't want to do it, because I would just rather pay my bills and be treated equal. Because if you put/fund money into the school, a lot of the families are getting assistance from the tribe and they don't like us. And why should I ask my tribe to fund your school and you don't even like us?

Teachers

In the interviews, parents also had varying perceptions of teachers. Some said that their child's teacher is very helpful, especially with students with disabilities. Others have the same comments as this parent,

Students are not learning all they are needed to learn in the classrooms because of the teachers, because they're not willing to help. Some of the teachers say they don't have time to stop or go back and help because they're trying to teach the whole class. They say the students need to listen. My child said she does listen, but sometimes she just doesn't get it/catch on.

Parents explained that whenever they have a problem, they discuss it with teachers but don't feel that it is ever addressed or taken care of. Parents expressed concern about teachers that don't communicate with them, make it hard for them to get involved, have a bad attitude, are just there for a paycheck, and are not willing to help their child(ren). One parent stated that "It's like schools and teachers now are so tight, they don't want to do anything that they don't have to do... There is that pressure to stay with curriculum."

Communication

As shown in Tables 4 and 5, responses from surveys revealed that the majority of parents are informed of ways to get involved and events that go on at their child(ren)'s school. Open ended responses show that schools promote and encourage parental involvement through calendars, notes, and flyers. Also schools utilize the monthly newsletter and website to inform parents of events going on. The parents that disagreed explained that they have not received anything from the schools and have asked for help but did not get it.

Table 4: Extent that Schools Inform Parents

Question	SA	A	D	SD	Total (n)
13. Informs parents of ways to get involved.	40% (31)	43% (33)	13% (10)	4% (3)	77
14. Informs parents of events at school.	49% (38)	39% (31)	9% (7)	3% (2)	78

Table 5: Extent that Schools Inform Parents: Summary of Agree and Disagree by Questions in Table 4

	13	14
Strongly Agree (SA) + Agree (A)	83% (64)	88% (69)
Disagree (D) + Strongly Disagree (SD)	17% (13)	12% (9)

As seen in tables 4 and 5, parents agreed with questions 13 and 14. However, there were some statistically significant differences amongst who said what in these questions. For question 13, the responses of parents varied by SES, elementary or secondary grades, gender, child rank, and residence. Parents of females, in secondary grades, with higher SES, with an only or youngest child, and in states other than Alabama less strongly agreed that the schools inform them of ways to get involved. For question 14, the responses differed by grade,

gender, and child rank. Parents of females, students in secondary grades, and of an only child, all less strongly agreed that the school informs them of events at school.

In looking at the communication between schools and parents, Table 6 shows that on average parents received PTA/PTO notes four times, reports concerning other school related activities six times, written notes from the teacher 12 times, feedback on child's progress each grading period seven times, a school newsletter five times, and some type of invitation to attend events eight times, per year. Many parents explained that they receive a monthly newsletter from the school explaining events that will take place that month to inform and invite them to events and special ceremonies at school. Parents explained that they talk on the phone or received written notes or e-mails from their child's teacher when needed. On average parents talked on the phone with their child's teacher two times per year. Clearly parents receive more written communication than phone calls from the teacher. Children in elementary grades get daily reports of behavior, assignments, and activities. They also explained that the teachers and the schools use some form of backpack or folder to send home assignments, grades, and discipline. Also teachers frequently send notes to parents in sealed envelopes. Parents explained that they receive weekly reports, progress reports, and report cards. One parent explained that now parents can check on-line for grades, notes, absentees, memos, disciplinary actions, and alerts. This is one tool that school systems have implemented to make parents more aware of what is going on with their child in all aspects of education.

Table 6: Communication between Schools and Parents

Question	0-2 times per year	3 or more times per year	Average (Mean)	Total (n)
17. Received PTA/PTO notes.	43% (23)	57% (31)	3.89	54
18. Received reports concerning other school related activities.	48% (28)	52% (30)	5.67	58
21. Talked on the phone with my child's teacher.	78% (47)	22% (13)	1.6	60
22. Received written notes from teacher.	50% (29)	50% (29)	12.07	58
25. Received feedback on child's progress each grading period.	12% (7)	88% (50)	6.98	57
26. Received school newsletter.	40% (21)	60% (31)	5.19	52
27. Invited me to attend events.	21% (11)	79% (42)	7.77	53

Parents with higher SES, a child in secondary grades, and that are tribal members less strongly agree that they receive PTA/PTO notes. Many parents in secondary grades and at private schools explain that they do not have a PTA/PTO therefore they could not get notes from meetings. Parents with a child in secondary grades and that are 1st generation descent talked on the phone with their child's teacher more often. Parents with students in private schools and with a higher SES were communicated with less through written notes by the teacher. Though the majority of parents agreed that they received feedback on their child's progress three or more times during the year, children residing in Alabama, in secondary grades, and with parents that are married are less likely to receive reports on progress. Parents of children in private school and parents with a higher education level received less school newsletters. Parents with children in states other than Alabama are invited more often by the school to attend events. Also parents that have a higher SES were less likely to be invited to attend school events.

III. Parent Involvement

My children do come first and their education needs are a top priority to me. ~ A Parent

Table 7 shows that on average, parents volunteered a total of four times during the school year, attended three PTA/PTO meetings, met with their child's teacher seven times, volunteered for field trips and school activities three times, and attended school sporting events three times. Open ended responses show that parents volunteer for class parties, field trips, sporting events, and when needed. Many parents stated that there is no PTA/PTO at the high school or private school. In an interview, one parent explained,

One thing that I do not like about my child's school is the fact that they do not have a PTO group. My opinion of a parent group is it makes you have the highest participation level and know what is going on within the school walls. The school at this point does not have a lot of parent involvement activities.

Parents' reasons for meeting with the teacher (Question 20) were about grades, extra credit, field trips, problems, and as needed. Parents explained that the reason for not participating in school sporting events was because there are no sporting events at the school. Parents' participation in Title VII parent committee meetings was on average less than one time per year. Many parents had never heard of Title VII.

Table 7: Parent Involvement

Question	0-2 times per year	3 or more times per year	Average (Mean)	Total (n)
15. Volunteered at school.	57% (40)	43% (30)	3.64	70
16. Attended PTO/PTA.	66% (42)	34% (22)	2.83	64
19. Attended Title VII parent committee meetings.	98% (57)	2% (1)	.33	58
20. Met with child's teacher.	56% (35)	44% (28)	7.02	63
23. Volunteered for field trips and school activities.	63% (38)	37% (22)	2.58	60
24. Attended school sporting events.	57% (28)	43% (21)	4.8	49

Though the majority of parents have been involved at school 0-2 times per year, there were some significant difference that tell us which parents were involved more. Parents of male students volunteered more at school. Parents of 1st generation students attended more PTO/PTA meeting during the year. Parents of children in elementary school and with lower SES met more with their child(ren)'s teacher. Parents with students in public schools volunteered more often for field trips and school activities.

In interviews, parents explained that they are involved at home with their child's homework and studying. They also do their best to get their child extra help with learning. Besides being involved with education, parents explained that they are involved with extracurricular activities, church activities, and sports games and practices. Because the tribe has many sports activities year round for children and adults of all ages, parents are involved with these sports but they are not considered school sports. Instead, parents see being

involved with these as being involved in community events. At school, parents are involved as room parents, chaperones on field trips, band boosters, special events, and awards ceremonies. One parent explained that she tries not to be too involved and embarrassing, but she does let the teachers know that she is there if they need her and not to be afraid to contact or call her about anything. Another parent explained that though her child's teacher is not very good at communication, if there is a problem the parent takes it upon herself to call or send a letter to schedule a conference or have the teacher call to discuss what is going on. Parents shed light on what hinders their involvement: work, parents' feelings that teachers act like they are better than the parents, and assumptions made by teachers that parents don't care. One parent explained that he volunteered at the school to do a program about Native Americans with crafts, a drum, and history about Native Americans and the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. However, he stopped volunteering because he was not wanted. The teacher told this parent that "it wasn't in her curriculum to teach about Indians, she only teaches pilgrims."

IV. Indian Culture

We owe it to ourselves and our children to know their culture, for them to know where they came from. And like you say, not be embarrassed. That's our culture, that's who you are.
~ A Parent

Through survey responses and interviews with parents, the discussion of Indian culture revolved around three main themes: 1) educating our children, 2) educating the schools, teachers, and staff, and 3) increasing cultural awareness for other students, schools, and areas.

Table 8 and 9 show the parents' mixed feelings about the schools and Indian culture. In Table 9, the responses show that 51% of parents agree that the school understand Indian culture and 58% agreed that the schools value Indian culture. Slightly higher are the responses that 62% agreed that the school is open to learning about Indian culture and 66% agreed that the schools are open to including Indian culture. Although parents think the schools don't understand Indian culture, they feel that schools are somewhat open to learning and including Indian culture.

Open ended survey questions revealed that the parents had mixed feelings about the schools understanding, valuing, learning, and including Indian culture. Some parents see that the school discriminates against tribal children and feel that the school will never incorporate Indian culture because of this. Others stated that the school promotes understanding of cultures and values. They feel that the school tries to work with Indian children and the tribe to promote Indian culture. Some parents argue that because of monetary contributions from the tribe that the school is very open to Indian culture and Indian children. The children who attend schools with small numbers of Indian children feel that this is the reason for not doing more with Indian culture. Others see that although Indian culture is not addressed, if someone worked with the school they would be open to including Indian history, culture, and/or language.

Table 8: Schools and Indian Culture

Question	SA	A	D	SD	Total (n)
3. School understands Indian culture.	28% (20)	23% (17)	26% (19)	23% (17)	73
4. Values Indian culture.	28% (19)	30% (21)	20% (14)	22% (15)	69
5. Open to learning about Indian culture.	29% (22)	33% (25)	28% (21)	10% (8)	76
6. Open to including Indian culture.	28% (21)	38% (29)	28% (21)	6% (5)	76

Note. The yellow highlighted areas show the highest percentage.

Table 9: Schools and Indian Culture: Summary of Agree and Disagree by Questions in Table 8

	3	4	5	6
Strongly Agree (SA) + Agree (A)	51% (37)	58% (40)	62% (47)	66% (50)
Disagree (D) + Strongly Disagree (SD)	49% (36)	42% (19)	38% (29)	34% (26)

In Table 9 the responses to questions three and four are divided almost evenly while the responses to five and six were more weighed toward agreeing with the statements. Therefore it is important to understand which parents are saying what. In question three, the parents that disagreed about schools understanding Indian culture had children in secondary grades, with higher SES, and parents that were married. Parents of children in private schools, secondary grades, and with higher SES disagreed more that the schools value Indian culture. Parents with children in secondary grades and with higher SES also disagreed more that the schools are open to learning about or including Indian culture.

Though some parents explained that schools are teaching their children about Native Americans through text books; most reported that from what they know, their children are

not learning about Native Americans, the tribe, or Indian culture. One parent reported that in November “the school did have Indian month but they only did something for two days.”

Also parents emphasized the importance of cultural awareness and cultural education for non-native students, teachers, staff, and communities. “There are people from other areas closer to the tribe that don’t know anything about Indians or don’t know that there is an Indian tribe so close.”

Parents suggested that the schools offer Indian history, culture, and language classes. “If you are going to teach various languages in the public school system as an elective, why not have Indian culture as an elective in Indian schools.” However, it was also suggested that “if you teach them the language we need some way for them to implement that language in their daily activity somehow some way. Because if you don’t use it, you lose it.” Parents also suggested increasing awareness within the school and among the teachers by sending information to the schools and teaching materials to give them correct information and information to teach about Creek history.

Indian Aide

Through talking with parents, I found that most parents did not know if there was an Indian aide in their child’s school, what this aide does, or if the aide helps their child. However, there were a few parents that had very positive comments about the Indian aide at their school. Parents discussed how the aide teaches, tutors, helps them not to fall behind on school work, gets extra work for students to practice until they catch on, comes to the classroom to help during class and after the teacher teaches a lesson. They discussed how the aide gets progress reports from the teachers to see what the students need help with.

V. TRIBE

Parents made suggestions for ways to improve the schools. Parents have also suggested ways that the tribe can help them, their child(ren), and the schools. One of the main things that many parents suggested is for the tribe to build its own school. The second was that the tribe aid 1st generation descent children with college. In relation to working with the schools, parents suggested that the tribe be more involved with the middle and high school students, work with schools to build a better relationship, send information/teaching materials to schools to inform them about Creek history, and contact the county system when you have a newly enrolled Indian child in the system so that they are aware. Other parents' suggestions were to offer additional education during the afterschool and summer programs, tutoring services to all children, cultural services, make parents aware of the benefits/services available to children, and provide transportation from private schools. Parents also suggested that the tribe have an available bus driver to drive the tribal bus so it can be used more often for school functions. One parent recommended that

The education department work with the Creek Indian Enterprise and PCI Gaming to implement education needs to forward Tribal members for future job opportunities. Example: All the job listings that have been posted recently that paid an enormous salary required a business management degree. Counsel our own Tribal members of the future opportunities so they can be there to manage our Tribal entities.

Parents were concerned that the children living outside of the city limits got the least help from the tribe and education department and were the last to find out about planned events for the younger children (educational events). They also stated that they wish the tribe could assist children not in local area with education. Other parents brought attention to the fact that there is unfair treatment and not the "same respect" given to those Indian children

that attend public/city schools as compared to the school that most of our children attend.

One parent explained, “I think that if the tribe helps one school they should help all that have tribal members and Indian descent children attending. What’s fair is fair.”

Many parents expressed appreciation for the tutoring, donations, and tuition assistance scholarship that is given to tribal members. They are very thankful for the dedication and hard work of the education department and board. “Overall, I am well-pleased with the tribe's educational efforts. I think it is a wonderful shift to see such emphasis on education. The tribe is working well with the school systems and it shows.”

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Limitations

The majority of parents' opinions collected for this survey were done through surveys. It is interesting to note that the survey data is much more positive than interview conversations. Therefore, I should note that the survey method limits parents' words, feelings, and stories to agreeing and disagreeing with a question instead of explaining and providing details. Through my conversations with tribal children and parents, these are not the stories I have been hearing for the 5 past years that I have been working at the Summer Youth Program and serving on the Tribe's Education Committee. Also, this was not a random sample but a sample of convenience. Because the surveys were not mailed or given to everyone that met the criteria, there is a chance that not every person was given the opportunity to complete a survey. Therefore, some perceptions and voices were not shared in this report.

Summary of Parents' Perceptions

Overall parents had positive comments about the schools that their children are attending. When looking at parents responses, the categories of education quality, parent involvement, and Indian culture arose. Parents were very positive about the quality, satisfaction, expectations, and treatment from schools. Parents explained that schools provide a quality education and they are satisfied with that education. They also explained that the schools 1) value their input, 2) expect Indian children to do well academically and behave

well, 3) treat Indian children, parents, and the community with respect, 4) seek parental support, guidance, and assistance, 5) are very welcoming and helpful, and 6) inform parents of ways to get involved and events at school. Parents in elementary grades explained that they receive daily reports of behavior and progress where as students in secondary grades received weekly reports, progress reports, and report cards.

However, there were also mixed feelings revealed in surveys and interviews relating to schools, teachers, treatment, and communication. Parents are concerned that schools 1) focus too much on standardized test scores, 2) do not make them aware of available resources, 3) treat Indian boys differently, 4) are only after money from the tribe, 5) do not teach diversity and cultural sensitivity, and 6) do not prepare students for transition from elementary school to middle school. Parents are concerned that teachers are not willing to help or do not have time to stop or go back and help students and do not communicate with parents.

Parents reported very high parent involvement. Parents reported high attendance volunteering at the school with field trips, activities, classroom parties, special events, attending PTA/PTO meetings, meeting with teachers, and attending sporting events. Parents also explained that at home they help their child(ren) with homework, studying, and getting extra help. Parents explained that they are also involved with their child(ren)'s extracurricular activities, church activities, and sports games and practices. Parents explained that their reasons for not volunteering are because of work, they are not wanted, and teacher's attitudes that parents don't care.

In discussing Indian education, three main themes were discussed: educating our children, educating the schools, teachers, and staff, and increasing cultural awareness for

other students, schools, and areas. Parents expressed mixed feelings about schools and Indian culture. Although parents think that schools do not understand or value Indian culture, they are optimistic that schools would be open to learning and including Indian culture. Some parents felt that the schools discriminate against Indian children and others say that the schools work with Indian children and the tribe to promote Indian culture. Others felt that monetary contributions from tribe are a huge factor now in how the Indian students are treated. Parents reported that their children are not learning about Native Americans, the tribe, or Indian culture while at school. Most parents did not know if there was an aide, what the aide does, and if they help their child(ren). However, there were a few parents that discussed how the aide has helped their child(ren).

Differences by Background Information

When looking at the significant statistics (Appendix C), it is evident that SES and elementary and secondary grades are the two demographics that have the largest effect on the questions. These questions include questions about the quality of education, satisfaction, Indian culture, values input, treatment, communication from teachers and the school with parents on ways to get involved and progress. Parents of students in secondary grades and with higher SES were less satisfied with these aspects of schools.

Marital Status, School, Residence, Tribal Member or 1st generation, and education level were each significant for only in a few questions. The difference being that married parents, private schools, and parents with a higher education level all were less satisfied or less involved in education. Gender and child rank were significant in questions about quality of education, expectations of behavior, treatment of Indian children, informing parents of ways

to get involved and events at school, and volunteering at the school. Parents of females reported to be less informed by the teachers and school and involved with their child(ren)'s education.

Summary of Parents' Suggestions

Parents were concerned about the help being provided to students with learning disabilities and struggling students. They would like to see schools offer special education services for those in need. Parents requested more one-on-one attention, up-to-date facilities, and challenging activities for smarter students. Parents would like to see students being made aware of their options after graduation for college and training programs.

When discussing Indian culture, parents suggested more cultural awareness and education for non-native students, teachers, staff, and communities. The parents suggested that the tribe provide schools with teaching materials about Creek history. Parents also would like to see schools offering Indian history, culture, or language classes.

Parents suggested ways that they would like to see the tribe help with education. The top two suggestions being that the tribe build its own school and to aid 1st generation students with college funding. Parents would also like to see the tribe more involved with the middle and high school students and build better relationships with ALL schools that tribal member and descent children attend. Other suggestions for ways to improve education is to contact schools systems when tribal members enroll, offer additional education during summer and afterschool programs, and to work with CIE and PCI gaming to look at possibilities of training for jobs. Parents showed concern that students attending schools in town and out of the county and state are not informed, assisted with education, or treated fairly.

Current Tribal Efforts

The tribe is currently addressing parents' suggestions for aiding 1st generation students with college by working to offer 1st generation competitive college scholarships for Fall 2008. Also parents requested tutoring assistance which is currently being provided afterschool through the education department.

The principals and Title VII Indian aides from Escambia County Middle School (ECMS) and Huxford Elementary School met with the education committee to discuss what they are doing to educate and aid Indian children, ways that the tribe can help the school, and to strengthen relationships between the tribe and these schools. The Indian aide from Huxford explained that she pulls Indian students out of class and works in small groups to offer those that need assistance extra help. The representatives from Huxford continue to work closely with the education department and tribe to meet the needs of Indian students.

In addressing Indian culture and history for the 2007 year, ECMS arranged for a program during Native American Heritage Month in November. Also, the tribe has implemented the Pow Wow Club, Summer Youth Prevention Program, and Tribal Youth Council which all provides opportunities for students of all ages to learn Poarch Creek history, culture, and language. In addition, the tribe has established the Fred L. McGhee Early Learning Center for pre-k students that teach lessons in history, culture, and language.

Conclusions

Parents responses from the data collected show that in general they are satisfied with the education that their child(ren) are receiving. However, they feel that Indian culture, language, and history are very important and would like to see these included in schools.

They would like to see the schools and tribe build better relationships and work together to incorporate this into schools. Parents reported to be very involved in their child(ren)'s education and willing to do whatever needed to see that their child(ren) get the best education possible. Suggestions from these parents can inform the schools and tribe of ways to get involved and to help Indian children, parents, and schools.

I propose that this report be used to facilitate two discussions between 1) the tribe and parents and 2) schools, parents, and the tribe. These discussions can be used to discuss ways to address parents concerns.

In the discussion between parents and the tribe I propose that we highlight parents concerns and suggestions to find ways that we can understand why and how to change things. The parents' main suggestion was for the tribe to build a school. If parents think this is so important we need to first discuss what the parents are looking for in schools? What kinds of things they think are important for their child(ren) to be learning? Then there should be some discussion about how their thoughts about school can be conveyed to the school systems currently in place and how the tribe can work with schools to help in making them places that they want their children to attend. If schools agree to work with the tribe and parents to address concerns and improve the education being provided then is there a need for a tribal school? What kind of school would parents want? Do parents want their children to be taught in an all-Indian school? What curriculum should be taught? What grades should be included? All of these issues should be discussed by parents and the tribe to get a clear picture of what parents are looking for in a school.

Parents discussed the importance of Indian history, culture, and language classes being offered to students. However, I propose that parents have a discussion with other tribal

members about 1) How would you propose to include Indian culture, history, and/or language into schools?; 2) What information would you like to see taught and how would you like this taught?; 3) Would you want a non-Indian teaching this? It is important to hear from the tribe what they do and don't want schools teaching their children about Native Americans and the tribe. It is also important to understand where and how they do want these aspects taught to their children. Should it be taught by parents, community members, the tribe, or schools? That is an important discussion for parents and tribal members to have.

Parents stated that Indian boys are being judged and treated differently; however parents of boys reported to be more informed of ways to get involved with their child's education. How are boys being treated differently and why are parents of boys more informed by schools? Also, parents with lower SES and of male students had more positive attitudes about the schools. What is the difference in their opinions? Parents discussed how the tribe being partnered with certain schools helps in the treatment of the students, parents, and community. Does this also affect the student's education?

To address other concerns that parents have, I propose that the following questions be discussed in the conversation between parents and the tribe: 1) What are ways that the tribe can be involved with ALL schools that tribal members attend?; 2) Why do parents not know about Title VII and the Indian Aide at their child's school?; 3) What is the best way to inform parents and get information out about events at the tribe?; 4) What would you like summer programs and after school programs teach and include?; and 5) What are ways that the tribe can help better inform parents living outside of the community?.

After a discussion between parents and the tribal community, we will have a better sense of parents' expectations of schools and their suggestions for ways to improve

education. Then I feel that it is important to convey the information to the schools from that discussion and comments that were shared in this report concerning schools. Therefore, I propose that there be a meeting between schools, parents, and the tribe to discuss concerns and suggestions. Some parents explained that schools are teaching about Native Americans through text books; however most reported that their children are not learning about Native Americans, the tribe, or Indian culture. It is important to hear from the schools on what is being taught about Native Americans and/or the tribe. Parents emphasized the importance of teaching this information. So, how can the tribe and school work together to get materials and resources to schools in teaching about Native Americans and the tribe? Parents also emphasized the importance of teaching Native American history and cultural awareness to non-native students, teachers, staff, and communities. They feel this will help in treatment of Native Americans. It is important to hear from the schools on how they currently support and encourage Native American students and how the school teaches staff, teachers, and non-native children about diversity, cultural sensitivity, and Native Americans?

Other concerns parents had were about communication and transition. I propose that schools and parents discuss how much communication is “good” or “bad” communication? What are parents and schools expectations about communication between teachers and schools? Also I propose that schools and parents discuss ways that elementary schools and middle schools can work together to make transition better for students. Also, parents were concerns about preparing students for life after school. How can schools make students more aware of opportunities for careers, school, and training after school? What ways can the school and/or tribe help to prepare students for life after school? Lastly, there was concern from parents at the private school about the way Indian students and parents are

treated. I propose that there be a discussion about treatment Indian students are receiving and ways to improve this.

Discussion amongst schools, parents, and the tribe can be used as a tool for addressing problems, gaining information and explanations, and changing situations. In order to see that our children get the best education it is important to take the comments and suggestions from this report along with discussions between parents, schools, and the tribe to work together for the education of the future generation.

7. The school values my input about the education of my child/children.					
8. The school expects Indian children to do well academically.					
9. The school expects that Indian children behave well.					
10. The school treats Indian children with respect.					
11. The school treats Indian parents with respect.					
12. The school treats the Indian community with respect.					
13. The school informs parents about ways to get involved with their child's/children's education.					
14. I am informed of events at the school.					

II. Please list the number of times that the following happened in your child's school this year. Also, please provide any additional comments that you may have by writing them in the Comments section after each question.

	Times per year	Additional Comments
15. I volunteered at the school.		
16. I attended Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings.		
17. I received notes from PTA or PTO meetings.		
18. I received reports concerning other school related meetings.		
19. I attended Title VII parent committee meetings.		
20. I met with my child's teacher(s).		

21. I talked on the phone with my child's teacher(s).		
22. I received written notes from the teacher(s).		
23. I volunteered for field trips and school activities.		
24. I attended school sporting events.		
25. I received feedback on my child's progress each grading period.		
26. I received a school newsletter.		
27. The school invited me to attend events.		

III. OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

28. Please list any suggestions that you have for ways that the school and/or the tribe could help in your child's education?

29. Please list any more comments that you may have.

IV. Demographics

Please fill in the information that applies to you and your child.

In school, is your child considered Native American or is he/she grouped in another category? If other, please explain.

_____ Native American _____ Other Please Explain: _____

**Highest level of parent's education:
MOTHER**

_____ some high school education

_____ High School Diploma or GED

_____ Technical College Degree

_____ Associate's Degree

_____ Bachelor's Degree

_____ Master's Degree

_____ PhD

_____ N/A

FATHER

_____ some high school education

_____ High School Diploma or GED

_____ Technical College Degree

_____ Associate's Degree

_____ Bachelor's Degree

_____ Master's Degree

_____ PhD

_____ N/A

Marital Status

_____ Single

_____ Married

_____ Divorced

_____ Separated

_____ Widowed

If you would like to participate in an interview to discuss more about how the schools treat you and your children, please provide the following information:

Name

Daytime Phone Number

Evening Phone Number

E-mail address

*Please tear off this page and give it to Karla Martin.

APPENDIX B: Interview Guide

1. How does the school treat your child(ren) and Indian children?

Probes:

- What has been good about your child(ren)s experience?
- What challenges have there been?

- Indian Aide?
 - Help your child?
 - Communicate with child's teacher to address child's needs?
 - Keep you informed of child's progress, needs, and ways you can help?

- Title VII
 - Meetings?

2. How are you involved in your child(ren)'s education?

Probes:

- At home?
- At school?
- School treat you?
- Feel welcome by your child's teacher, principal, faculty and staff?
- School inform you of ways to get involved?
- Reasons why you can't participate more?

- Parents with kids not in K-6
 - More, less, or equally involved in your child's education, now since your child is not in elementary school.
 - Why?
 - Involvement level changed because of the school, the child, or the parent?

3. How does the school address Indian culture?

Probes:

- Treat the community?
- Teach your child about Native Americans?
 - Information accurate? Current?
- Utilize the Poarch Creek community and resources?

APPENDIX C: Gammas and Level of Significance

Question	SES	K-5 and 6-12	Marital Status	School	Gender	Child Rank	Residence	TM or 1 st generation	Mother Ed.	Father Ed.
1	.422 (.037)									.414 (.052)
2	.469 (.012)									
3	.686 (.000)	.577 (.000)	.426 (.031)							
4	.694 (.000)	.589 (.000)		.465 (.050)						
5	.545 (.000)	.630 (.000)								
6	.564 (.000)	.652 (.000)								.385 (.033)
7	.414 (.037)	.556 (.004)								.412 (.046)
8					.417 (.033)					.521 (.012)
9					.495 (.010)	.369 (.028)				
10		.455 (.15)				.344 (.016)				
11		.419 (.037)								.438 (.024)
12	.426 (.026)	.561 (.003)								
13	.430 (.020)	.612 (.000)			.393 (.027)	.309 (.029)	.566 (.025)			
14		.571 (.001)			.442 (.016)	.330 (.032)				
15					.538 (.012)					
16								.504 (.036)		
17	.675 (.002)	.613 (.017)						-.545 (.027)		.809 (.000)
20	.677 (.001)	.568 (.019)							-.673 (.002)	
21		.694 (.002)						.597 (.035)		
22	.633 (.004)			.795 (.002)						
23				.805 (.003)						
25		.828 (.033)	1.000 (.007)				-1.000 (.051)			
26				.845 (.002)					-.638 (.013)	-.530 (.044)
27	.607 (.052)						-1.000 (.019)			

Note. The first number is the gamma. The further away from zero the greater the association between the measures. The second number is the level of significance. The smaller the number is the greater the significance. Because the gender of the parent completing the survey was not identified, I can only use father and mother's education level when they are both statistically significant for the question.

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