

## New Horizons in the Osage Nation: Agricultural Education and Leadership Development

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Citation: Hayman, J., RedCorn, A., & Zacharakis, J. (2018). New horizons in the Osage Nation: Agricultural education and leadership development. In E. McHenry-Sorber & D. Hall (Eds.), The diversity of rural educational leadership [Special issue]. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 34(5), 1-10.

*From 2004-06, the Osage Nation of Oklahoma reformed its government from a tribal council system to a tripartite constitution. Following this reorganization, through a community outreach effort a 25-year strategic plan was developed to guide the Nation moving forward. Now, a decade into the plan, recent Osage land (re)acquisition across the reservation has generated new potential and need for agricultural education and leader development. Our contribution to the Journal of Research in Rural Education's special issue on diversity in rural education is a framework for how the Osage Nation might develop agricultural education that focuses on fostering Osage-specific place-based identities in the next generation of agricultural leaders. While framing this conversation through Dennison's lens of Osage ribbon work and settler-colonial entanglement, paired with Gruenewald's critical pedagogy of place, this essay informs educators about the unique position of Native nations in education and simultaneously a theoretical and practitioner-driven analysis of how agricultural education intersects with the Osage Nation's 25-year strategic plan.*

The Osage Nation of Oklahoma has recently experienced significant growth in educational programming, while simultaneously (re)acquiring significant tracts of land. During this era of change, minimal attention has been given to the corresponding need to develop Osage-specific agricultural education programming as a mechanism to foster a new generation of Osage leaders and land stewards. At the time of this publication, the Osage Nation's involvement in agricultural education programming has been minimal, and this essay serves as an agricultural education entry point in the literature for Osage Nation educational leaders to consider Osage positionalities and possibilities in both theoretical and practical contexts. Consequently, the substantive topics in this essay might motivate and inspire research and program development in the community that might bolster educational achievement of Osage students,

foster stronger Osage-specific place-based identities, and simultaneously contribute to the ongoing community development projects in the Osage Nation.

The Osage Nation of Oklahoma is one of over 560 federally recognized Native nations in the United States (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2016), and as a sovereign nation the Osage people are entangled in an ongoing relationship with settler-colonialism (Dennison, 2012). Acting as agents of a sovereign government with a right to educate their citizenry and build programming that fosters Osage cultural identities, the Osage educational leaders who work among the various departments in the executive branch must lead in a context that is very different from mainstream education administrators. Furthermore, like rural communities, Native nations are not homogeneous since significant sociocultural differences are found across Indian Country, as is diversity within and across the Osage community. This dynamic calls for leaders in Osage education, and leaders developed through Osage Nation programming, to have a very specific and localized knowledge base and skill set. While this essay is not disseminating empirical research, our contribution to the *Journal of Research in Rural Education's* special issue on diversity in rural education is a framework which suggests practical and theoretical considerations for how the

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The *Journal of Research in Rural Education* is published by the Center on Rural Education and Communities, College of Education, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802. ISSN 1551-0670

Osage Nation might develop agricultural education, with a focus on fostering Osage-specific place-based identities in the next generation of agricultural leaders.

In 2006, the Osage Nation reformed its government to a tripartite system (Dennison, 2012), and the new constitution explicitly prioritized education (O.N. Const. art. XVII). Quickly following the reform process, Osage leadership established a task force that solicited input from the community, out of which a comprehensive 25-year vision and strategic plan to guide policy and program development was created (Osage Nation, 2007). The core purpose of the plan is “to strengthen [Osage] government and society in order to preserve and perpetuate a full and abundant Osage way of life that benefits all Osages, living and as yet unborn” (Osage Nation, p. 4).

Within the strategic plan lie six focus areas and an explicit vision to “be a strong, proud, resilient, and enduring sovereign nation” (Osage Nation, p. 5). These six areas are economic development, cultural preservation, education, health, minerals and natural resources, and governance and justice (p. 7). A decade later, many of the initiatives in the plan have come to fruition, and Osage leaders are rapidly taking on a stronger role in education as they enter the last phase of implementation referred to as “New Horizons” (Osage Nation, p. 7). We argue that development of agricultural education presents opportunities to foster a new generation of Osage leaders and bolster efforts to move the nation forward as leaders work to fulfill the vision of the 25-year strategic plan.

Furthermore, the Osage Nation has recently (re)acquired over 50,000 acres of land, and these efforts are significant to the collective identity of the Osage people (Klein, 2017). These are some of the same lands that the Osage Nation used for essential sustenance prior to Euro-American settlement, and even though they are entangled in an ongoing relationship with settler-colonialism that often connects Osage stories to oil and minerals (Dennison, 2012), many Osage worldviews are deeply connected to their lands. Therefore, in this context agricultural education is an effort aimed at cultural healing and the ongoing adaptation and vitality of Osage ways, as much as it is about agro-economic development.

From this unique leadership context, we present theoretical and practical considerations for developing a new generation of agricultural leaders through education as it relates to the New Horizons phase of the 25-year strategic plan. We suggest that Osage Nation educational leaders consider the value of developing agricultural expertise and skills by creating a critical pedagogy of place which fosters connection of Osage identities to the land, and in turn aids cultural and community development efforts which encourage responsible stewardship for the unique resources found within the Nation’s boundaries. We further discuss how agricultural education has potential to advance a variety of pri-

orities and initiatives outlined across all six areas of focus in the plan, not just areas centered on education. Through these efforts, we also build on literature that illustrates the unique positions and roles of Native nations in the field of education, particularly from a governance perspective (A. Bowers, 2011; Mackety, Bachler, Barley, & Cicchinelli, 2009; Tribal Education Departments National Assembly [TEDNA], 2006).

### Understanding the Osage Nation Education Landscape

Like many Native nations, the Osage Nation operates from a unique jurisdictional position, especially when compared to mainstream K-12 contexts. Osage education leaders are responsible for the educational needs of 20,437 citizens of all ages, of which only 3,913 live on the reservation (L. Malone, personal communication, February 7, 2017). Furthermore, while the Osage Nation administers some early childhood programs, and the current administration is in the process of developing an Osage-specific K-12 school system, the majority of Osage citizens are attending general public schools, both on the reservation and across the United States. Those living within the reservation boundaries are mostly enrolled in one of several rural public-school districts connected to the Oklahoma State Department of Education, and these schools are not under Osage Nation oversight. Across Indian Country, this dynamic is common, considering that over 90% of American Indian students attend general public schools, not schools run by Native nations or the Bureau of Indian Education (A. Bowers, 2011). This situation creates a complex education leadership landscape of overlapping jurisdictions and responsibilities.

Overall, in the last 10-20 years, Osage Nation educational programming has seen unprecedented growth. As per the cultural preservation and education priorities outlined in the 25-year strategic plan, Osage leaders have developed a variety of new educational programs in an ongoing internal capacity-building effort. The Language Department now offers online and face-to-face courses across the community, with options for high school credit in the local public schools. The Cultural Center, among many educational initiatives, hosts a variety of courses for learning how to make traditional Osage clothing and manages a collection of traveling trunks full of culturally significant items that move around the community for educational purposes. Furthermore, the Osage Nation Education Department has concurrent enrollment partnerships with a local community college for high school upperclass students (Osage and non-Osage), along with several programs that support Osage students in public schools and early childhood education through tutoring, afterschool programming, college and career readiness, and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) initiatives, while also administer-

ing federal programs specific to Indian education, such as Johnson O'Malley (Bureau of Indian Education, 2017). In general, leaders are developing these programs in a landscape characterized by unique sociocultural, geographical, and jurisdictional complexity.

Two authors of this essay, Jann Hayman and Alex RedCorn, are both Osage and have experienced these sociocultural, geographical, and jurisdictional complexities, which are often not clearly understood in mainstream education. The authors both had Osage learning experiences outside of schools which helped to foster place-based identities in the Osage community, and after completing advanced degrees, they have returned in their own respective ways to contribute to the Osage Nation. Hayman currently serves as the director of a Department in the Osage Nation, and RedCorn recently developed a graduate-level place-based educational leadership program in partnership with a regional university (RedCorn, 2016). These educational experiences and the desire to return to the Osage people exemplify the importance of developing leaders to come back to the Osage community to enhance learning opportunities for the Osage people.

### **Theoretical Frameworks: Osage Ribbon Work and Critical Pedagogy of Place**

When considering scholarship and education with Indigenous populations, it is important to prioritize local knowledges and seek ways to prioritize those perspectives. This work is informed by Osage political anthropologist Dennison (2012, 2013), who uses Osage ribbon work to frame a complex modern existence with settler-colonial entanglements. Here we consider how ribbon work allows one to conceptualize how multiple scholarly perspectives can be woven together to work in tandem with one another, while still maintaining a unique place-based Osage quality. Specifically, we weave together scholarship on rural community development and place-based education, while incorporating critical and Indigenous perspectives which collectively help generate a strong foundation of scholarship that can support creating an Osage-specific critical pedagogy of place—one which will better connect students, and educators with the land and the community.

### **Osage Agricultural Education Leaders as Ribbon Work Artists**

While originally used as a way to describe Osage political reform in 2004-06, Dennison's (2012, 2013) work holds tremendous potential for conceptualizing leadership and educational scholarship. When describing the Osage constitutional reform process, she writes:

For their part the Osage and all American Indian nations have long understood the colonial process as at once devastating and full of potential. Osage ribbon work, born out of eighteenth-century trade with the French, is perhaps the ideal metaphor of colonial entanglement. Using the raw material and tools obtained from the French, Osage artists began by tearing the rayon taffeta into strips and then cutting, folding, and sowing [sic] it back together to form something both beautiful and uniquely Osage. In picking up the pieces, both those shattered by and created through the colonial process, and weaving them into their own original patterns, Osage artists formed the tangled pieces of colonialism into their own statements of Osage sovereignty. Osage ribbon work reminds us that it is possible to create new and powerful forms out of an ongoing colonial process. (Dennison, 2012, p. 6)

Through an eclectic variety of colorful combinations and geometric patterns, ribbon work is worn by the Osage on clothes, blankets, and shawls during ceremony, and beyond these contexts it is also found throughout the Osage community on government letterheads, publications, websites, and artwork as an ongoing statement of Osage nationalism (Powell, 2014). Recently, Dennison's metaphor has also been used for Osage scholarship in new methodological and theoretical contexts in the field of education (RedCorn, 2016), and this ongoing scholarship serves as a fitting framework for conceptualizing education in the Osage Nation.

Furthermore, Osage ribbon work as a framework allows educational leaders to consider how multiple scholarly positions can be reworked, reframed, and woven together to serve the specific interests of Osage agricultural education development in a modern entangled reality—including a highly complex relationship with oil, minerals, and wind energy that is highly relevant to this dialogue but is beyond the focus of this essay. This situation requires consideration for how non-Osage programs and frameworks might be reworked to create new and unique statements of Osage sovereignty. As a collection, the following scholarship might be viewed as a variety of individual ribbons which can be stitched together to form a larger Osage-specific framework for agricultural education. Consequently, the work of Osage agricultural education leaders becomes an ongoing exercise in ribbon work, as they work to weave theoretical and practical components together to create place-based programming to fit the specific needs of the Osage community.

### Stitching Together an Osage Critical Pedagogy of Place

Generating an Osage critical pedagogy of place might begin with practical scholarship focused on rural community-school partnerships and school-based enterprise. Miller (1995), Rosenfeld (1983), and Sher and Sher (1994) all emphasize the need for generating stronger ties between rural schools and community development efforts. As Sher and Sher (1994) suggest, community development policy should have “a concerted effort to make the rural community the foundation and focal point of the curriculum (rather than remaining incidental to it)” and should also “foster rural entrepreneurship” (p. 39). While, given the jurisdictional complexities that confront Osage educational leaders, obstacles to these recommendations exist, they further reinforce the value of continuing to develop a K-12 system managed by the Osage Nation. Additionally, they support a focus on partnership building with local schools for agricultural education and leadership development, particularly with existing programs such as Future Farmers of America (FFA) and 4-H.

While scholarship emphasizing the value of rural schools is highly relevant, developing an Osage critical pedagogy of place must also consider the work of Indigenous scholarship and how that scholarship works in tandem with place-based approaches. Indigenous scholars often urge educators to consider redefining education outside of the mainstream parameters of standardized tests and preparation for a profession (Cajete, 2012; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). They argue for Indigenous ecological thinking and reciprocity with the natural world to be embedded into curricula through experiential learning environments. Cajete (1994) describes this approach as developing “quality of thinking that embodies an ecologically-informed consciousness” (p. 46). Development of agricultural education and leadership in the Osage Nation holds the potential to generate this style of learning environment and better connect Osage identities to the land and surrounding environment in ways beyond the current emphasis on oil and minerals extraction.

Deloria and Wildcat (2001) emphasize that to be Indigenous means “to be of a place” (p. 31). They suggest that the living energy that inhabits and/or composes the universe (power), plus the relationship of things to each other (place), form “a simple equation: Power and place produce personality” (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 23). This personality can be found in the Osage Nation and further fostered through place-based approaches to agricultural education. Furthermore, Gruenewald/Greenwood (2003/2009)<sup>1</sup> argues that place-based education can be merged with critical pedagogy to create a critical pedagogy of place, which Gruenewald (2003) explains as

a contribution “to the production of educational discourses and practices that explicitly examine the place-specific nexus between environment, culture, and education” (p. 10). This intersection with critical theories is further reinforced through Grande’s (2008) Red Pedagogy, framed as “a way of thinking our way around and through the challenges facing American education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and our mutual need to define decolonizing pedagogies” (p. 250). Furthermore, Grande channels Lyons’ (2000) definition of sovereignty as a “people’s right to rebuild its demand to exist and present its gifts to the world ... an adamant refusal to dissociate culture, identity, and power from the land” (p. 457). Osage agricultural education can serve these purposes and work to disrupt the current power dynamics of educational systems which have long played the role of marginalizing, or Othering (Smith, 1999), Osage knowledges and worldviews. This practice could be a particular area of emphasis in the development of Osage agricultural education, as educational leaders must develop critical awareness in order to disrupt current power dynamics in our educational systems—to make space for the development of an Osage-specific critical pedagogy of place.

Furthermore, scholarship around the notion of students returning home as productive contributors in the community is also highly relevant when trying to develop Osage-specific place-based programming. Huffman (2011) uses transculturation theory to describe how “American Indians closely aligned with traditional culture tend to seek careers in which they serve Native communities and more likely plan to live on a reservation after college” (p. 1). In this context, Huffman’s application of transculturation theory frames learning not just as a personal endeavor, but as a means to strengthen one’s community. Consequently, Huffman’s scholarship suggests that Osage-specific place-based agricultural education at the P-12 levels will enhance the likelihood that students will return to the reservation after college to contribute to larger community development efforts. This research is reinforced by Faircloth (2009), who shares her own experiences as an American Indian woman leaving for college and career opportunities. Faircloth argues that while some learn to leave (Corbett, 2007), some also learn to stay, or learn to return in their own respective ways. As mentioned previously, the work of authors Hayman and RedCorn reinforce this notion, as they have returned to the Osage community to dedicate time and energy to community development projects.

Considering these scholarly foundations as a collective, we argue that development of agricultural education and leadership in the Osage community can be an ongoing exercise in theoretical and pedagogical ribbon work—one in which Osage educational leaders take the practical frameworks of rural and community development

<sup>1</sup>Gruenewald was later known as Greenwood, see note in Greenwood (2009).

and weave them together with critical and Indigenous scholarship to generate an Osage-specific critical pedagogy of place. These efforts can help move the Osage Nation toward the important decolonizing goal of enhancing self-determination (Smith, 1999), as agricultural education programs foster strong Osage place-based identities.

### **Articulating the Need, Potential, and Possibilities for Osage Agricultural Education**

Agricultural education is not explicitly mentioned in the Osage Nation's 25-year strategic plan, yet it holds potential to impact all six areas of focus. Here we outline practical needs and areas of possibility for agricultural education and leadership development in the Osage Nation.

#### **A Growing Osage Land Base**

The Osage reservation contains approximately 1,470,000 acres, bounded by the Arkansas River to the south and west and the state of Kansas to the north. Although all mineral rights still belong to the Osage Nation, most of the land surface is privately owned (Osage Allotment Act of 1906), creating a unique patchwork of land ownership. Topographically, the region has diverse capacity for agricultural development with the wooded hills of the cross timbers in the east to the open plains of the tallgrass prairie in the north and west.

As the 25-year plan clearly prioritized land purchases to increase the Osage Nation's land base, three key land (re) acquisitions have taken place since 2007. First, in 2014 the Nation reclaimed ownership of 270 acres, which have since been developed into a community garden called Bird Creek Farms (Osage Nation, 2015). Also in 2014, the Nation was donated a 9,000-acre ranch from a prominent Osage rancher (Duty, 2014). Most recently, in 2016 the Osage Nation purchased the approximately 43,000-acre Bluestem Ranch from media mogul Ted Turner. These land tracts are only the most notable under Osage Nation ownership; many smaller tracts amount to approximately 3,100 additional acres. These land (re)acquisitions have not only opened up new possibilities for agricultural education, they have simultaneously generated a need for knowledgeable stewards of Osage Nation land.

#### **The Local Osage Agricultural Educational Landscape and Economic Needs**

Currently 1,032 Osage children between the ages of 9 and 21 years of age live within the Osage reservation boundaries (L. Malone, personal communication, January 19, 2017) and within 12 school districts. Of these 12 districts, five are fully K-12, and only three have established

FFA programs: Pawhuska, established in 2000; Skiatook, established in 1947; and Woodland (formerly Ralston), established in 1927 (Oklahoma FFA, n.d.). There are also 11 4-H chapters, with a total of 210 children, both Osage and non-Osage (J. Jantzen, personal communication, January 24, 2017). Based on the rural economy of Osage County, there are opportunities to develop agriculture education programs, which can open pathways to create strong leaders and economic growth. Furthermore, as the Osage Nation continues to make progress on its 25-year plan, (re)acquire new lands, and enhance its role as one of the largest economic players in the community, it is logical for the Nation to develop its own agricultural education programming for the practical reasons of improving the agricultural skill set in the community and preparing citizens for jobs and entrepreneurship in the local economy. Important agricultural skills within the Osage boundaries include livestock management, crop production, grassland management, timber management, marketing and business planning, and entrepreneur development to support small businesses associated with agriculture such as construction, pesticide/herbicide application, custom farming and veterinary services.

Since FFA and 4-H organizations currently exist within the Osage Nation's boundaries, it makes practical sense to build off these programs, as some of their goals are aligned with Osage interests. The focus of 4-H is to "empower young people with the skills to lead for a lifetime" (National 4-H Council, 2017), while FFA's mission is to make a "positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education" (National FFA Organization, 2015). These organizations have existing curricula to implement agricultural education programs, and the Osage Nation might adapt these programs to Osage-specific contexts by including cultural and philosophical components. By including Osage-specific content, Osage children can continually engage with place-based Osage worldviews while simultaneously developing skills to make them successful leaders within their communities.

#### **Areas of Potential for Growth and Development**

With these potential benefits and outcomes for agricultural education in mind, below are several opportunities to develop programs in this New Horizons phase of the plan.

**The potential in local 4-H and FFA programs.** To develop future generations of knowledgeable and professional agricultural leaders, the Osage Nation can build on existing programs such as 4-H and FFA or generate new curricula that meet specific needs in the Osage community. The foundational principles for these well-established agricultural education programs have direct relevance to the

priorities and initiatives outlined in the 25-year plan. If the Osage Nation were to take what has already been developed in these programs and adapt it to the unique setting of Osage education, it could lead to unique Osage programming that could better fit their jurisdictional realities and directly impact four of the six key areas of focus within the 25-year strategic plan: economic development, cultural preservation, education, and minerals and natural resources.

Furthermore, such programs will reinforce the Osage Nation's long-term constitutional emphasis on developing programs that "benefit all Osages, those living and yet unborn" (Osage Nation, p. 4). By specifically focusing on curricula that emphasize agriculture and land use practices, woven with traditional Osage knowledge, there is an opportunity to create learning pathways of new land stewards who are more prepared to protect the culturally significant natural resources found within the Osage Nation. Simultaneously, new Osage-minded land stewards will be more prepared to take responsibility for the condition of the land for future generations.

**Exploring existing models with Native nations.** The Osage Nation can also look to other Native nations, such as the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, located approximately 100 miles south of the Osage Nation's headquarters, who are already engaging in similar efforts (B. Haltom, personal communication, February 10, 2016) to bolster their agricultural knowledge. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Agriculture Youth Development Program provides opportunities for Creek youth to participate in citizenship development and leadership development in agriculture, while simultaneously accommodating their own respective jurisdictionally complex landscape. The Creek program increases youth participation in agriculturally related activities and works concurrently with multiple 4-H and FFA chapters within their community. Using the Creek program as a guide, an Osage Nation agriculture youth program could enroll children in an Osage-specific program that would encourage concurrent enrollment in one of several local 4-H or FFA chapters. Ultimately, this approach might better accommodate the unique geographic and jurisdictional position of Osage education.

**Focus on leadership and agro-entrepreneurship development.** One specific area on which an Osage agriculture youth development program could focus is leader development. Not only does this fit Sher and Sher's (1994) community development vision, which emphasizes education that prepares rural youth for small-scale entrepreneurship, it also aims to create leaders who exhibit strong ethics and integrity. Through such programs, Osage people will be able to develop a new generation of agricultural leaders who can effectively navigate local politics and make sound decisions to acquire and manage Osage land resources. Amy Bowers (1999) emphasizes the importance for youth to un-

derstand the economic and political forces that "influence the sustainable characteristics of natural system" (p. 166), which is a primary foundation for any Osage agricultural education program. Bowers' comments illustrate that even though the Osage may own agricultural land, its agricultural leaders still have to produce cattle, crops, and timber economically and sustainably within the highly regulated agricultural rules that are designed to ensure high-quality meats and crops while preserving environmental resources. These considerations are for any Osage agricultural education program.

**Focus on sustainable ranching skills.** Another area of focus that could be included in any Osage agricultural education program is specific curricular emphasis on sustainable ranching practices. Since the vast majority of the newly (re)acquired Osage land is found within the Flint Hills ecosystem, it is important that the Osage Nation teach responsible and sustainable ranching practices from the outset. Using this existing land base, the Osage Nation can deliver workshops and develop curricula on important grassland management practices such as burning, determining stocking rates for both bison and cattle, rotational grazing, livestock health, and invasive species management. Such hands-on workshops are essential to fully implement effective agricultural practices. Furthermore, coordinating these efforts with the local land-grant university extension service will support existing Osage Nation STEAM programs and strengthen the Nation's human capital. Simultaneously, the curricula in these programs can be linked to historic and culturally specific stories and lessons of land use by Indigenous peoples, as Kincheloe and Steinburg (2008) emphasize the importance of understanding Indigeneity by stating that one must consider the "power and agency of indigenous peoples and the brilliant knowledges they produce" (p. 152). These foundational considerations during program development can help emerging leaders guide the Osage Nation into the future from an Osage-specific place-based perspective.

**Cultural mentorship.** With an emphasis on developing a uniquely Osage program, cultural mentorship opportunities could add important dimensions that mainstream agricultural education programs lack. Not only do young Osage members need to learn how to manage their land, but through intergenerational mentoring Osage leaders might explore opportunities to teach culturally specific knowledges that respect the use of their resources. In this cultural context, it is important to emphasize Edmundson and Martusewicz's (2013) pedagogy of responsibility to help youth understand the sense of place, including relationships with the land, natural resources, and culture. A first step in cultural mentorship would be partnering with various Osage Nation departments and knowledgeable Osage elders to create a culturally responsive curriculum specifically for agriculture and natural resources. Through these partnerships,

citizens who have fundamental Osage knowledge of the historical ties to the land and resources can provide training to both Osage youth and local agricultural educators. The Osage people were historically good stewards of the land, and it is important to (re)emphasize this knowledge base and bring it back into current educational systems.

Overall, these areas of focus are the foundational considerations for not only creating and implementing an Osage agricultural education program, but to sustain a program for future generations. As noted by Faircloth (2009), Native nations hold “the keys for the design and delivery of a truly Indigenous education for Native youth” (p. 3). In this context, the Osage Nation should be a leader in agricultural education across the Osage community, or at minimum, start building capacities to take on that role through the opportunities that currently exist. Extensive Osage cultural resources are available across the community, many of which are untapped, and they would be very important to consider in program development. Furthermore, these types of programs and resources can emphasize Indigenous foundations that the “earth and the universe are built upon the premise of cooperation and interdependence” (Kawagley & Barnhardt, 1999, p. 128). Through development of agricultural education programs with these considerations, the expertise of the Osage people to manage natural resources found within their jurisdictional boundaries will strengthen the Nation’s ability to continue moving into the future. Ultimately, such programs can provide important opportunities for the Osage Nation to develop a new generation of agricultural leaders.

### Implications for Research and Practice

Although scholarship related to Native American agriculture education from practitioner, governance, and educational leadership perspectives is limited, through an Osage ribbon work conceptual framework this essay serves to weave several fields together by bringing Osage-specific perspectives into the larger discourses of agricultural education, Indigenous agriculture, Indigenous studies, rural education, community development, educational leadership and policy studies, and American Indian education. Pursuing research tied to the salient topics discussed throughout this essay will pull these unique perspectives from the margins and make visible the agricultural education needs of Indigenous communities. This approach allows both scholars and practitioners to have a stronger foundational knowledge for building, and successfully implementing, programs that address the unique situations found in and across these communities. Additionally, this approach brings further attention to the need and potential for local and state education authorities, university extension services, and other key stakeholders to collaborate with Native nations and continue building culturally responsive

agriculture education programming that can persist across Indian Country. Furthermore, developing agriculture education programs and research in these contexts helps to more appropriately identify the specific needs of American Indian communities, which can help build the economic and cultural viability for these communities by enhancing the educational programming, place-based identities, and skill sets of future Indigenous land stewards.

### Conclusion: Filling the Need for Osage Stewardship of Osage Land

The Osage Nation Constitution states, “the Osage Nation shall provide for the utilization, development and conservation of all natural resources within the territory of the Nation for the maximum benefit of the Osage People” (Osage Nation, 2006, p. 25). Land is a significant and valuable resource to the Osage people and the importance of effectively managing these unique resources is clearly stated in the 25-year strategic plan. Cajete (2012) emphasizes the importance of Indigenous communities’ actively managing their land, ensuring that their resources are not mismanaged by other constituents. The reality is that our Eurocentric education systems are not designed to foster Indigenous identities, and the Osage Nation has the opportunity to empower youth through agricultural stewardship by rethinking this approach to education. By emphasizing ecological consciousness through Osage-specific place-based agricultural education, it becomes possible to foster stronger Osage identities and cultural knowledge while contributing to community development through improved land stewardship and Indigenous leader development. Through this effort, Osage leaders and educators must prepare themselves for the “renewed responsibilities of assisting others in their reconnections to the land, culture and community” (Cornassel, 2012, p. 98). As implied here, transitioning to this new approach to agricultural education in the Osage community will not be a straightforward task. Developing new agricultural education programs with an Osage-specific place-based quality will be ongoing cycles of trials and errors that are expected in the ever-evolving efforts to make new Indigenous educational spaces in an entangled settler-colonial reality. As Cajete (2012) emphasizes:

By reasserting Indigenous values and practices, integrating a contemporary context, and implementing Indigenous processes at all levels of Indian education, Indian people may truly take control of their own history by becoming the transforming agents of their own social reality. (p. 156)

Cajete’s words here are extremely relevant to the larger processes unfolding in the Osage Nation as evidenced by the 25-year strategic plan. As the Osage Nation continues

to seek ways to take control of its own history and land, developing unique place-based agricultural education and agricultural leaders is paramount. Leadership in agricultural education cannot only make substantive community development contributions across in the New Horizons phase of the 25-year strategic plan, these efforts can help generate a stronger place-based communal identity and continue to move the Osage Nation toward a higher degree of self-determination as Indigenous peoples.



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