

Culturally Responsive Language and Literacy Instruction With Native American Children

Matthew Gillispie

Many American Indian education leaders advocate for the need to combine evidence-based reading instruction with cultural-based educational practices. In the broader education literature, education philosophers propose analogous models such as culturally responsive teaching to meet the educational realities of diverse students. Culturally Responsive Early Literacy Instruction (CRELI) was a project funded by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs to train graduate scholars in speech–language pathology to work with American Indian/Alaska Native communities. The grant scholars and staff of CRELI worked with two early childhood education centers for American Indian preschoolers and developed curriculum units that featured culturally relevant storybooks as thematic centerpiece and activities to facilitate early language and literacy development. This clinical tutorial summarizes this work, broader components of culturally responsive teaching, and attributes of language-focused literacy curriculum and differentiated instruction, followed by a sample curriculum unit to demonstrate application of culturally responsive teaching concepts. **Key words:** *Alaska Native, American Indian, culturally based education, culturally responsive teaching, indigenous, language, literacy, Native American, preservice education*

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL of Teachers of English (NCTE) defined literacy as “a collection of communicative and sociocultural practices shared among communities These literacies are interconnected, dynamic, and malleable. As in the past, they are inextricably linked with histories, narratives, life possibilities, and social trajectories of all individuals and

groups” (NCTE Executive Committee, 2019; <https://ncte.org/statement/nctes-definition-literacy-digital-age>). For many American Indian/Alaska Natives (AI/ANs), literacy goes beyond decoding (reading) and encoding (writing) orthographic-based symbols and includes the multiliteracies of one’s senses that interpret and create meaning with auditory, linguistic, visual, spatial, tactile, movement/gestural, taste, smell, and spiritual inputs (Inglebret & CHiXapkaid, 2014). Inglebret and CHiXapkaid’s (2014) place-based multiliteracy framework describes the importance of the learning environment (place) and multisensory, experiential learning experiences for AI/AN children. A place-based, multiliteracy framework does not appear to be as valued in European American school systems and thus the consequences of colonialism continue to negatively impact the educational experiences of AI children.

While beyond the scope of this article, and while only briefly described here, the history of AI/AN tribes and nations is an

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integral component to the contemporary strengths and challenges of AI/AN tribes and nations. This article highlights the literacy needs of AI/AN children as well as culturally responsive methods for addressing these needs. First, I provide an overview of academic achievement gaps and disproportionate representation of AI/AN children in special education. Next, I briefly summarize the linguistic underpinnings of literacy development and the role of speech-language pathologists (SLPs) and language-focused curricula (Bunce, 1995; Rice & Wilcox, 1995) in literacy development. Finally, I describe components of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) as a growing educational philosophy by AI educators and an example application of CRT with speech-language pathology graduate students working with two Indigenous communities in northeast Kansas.

LITERACY NEEDS IN AI/AN CHILDREN

Since 1492, the European colonization of the Americas, disease, war and genocide, removal from ancestral lands, and forced assimilation (e.g., the boarding school era), together some of the consequences of colonialism, have resulted in intergenerational trauma and historical trauma (e.g., see Brave Heart, 2003) for AI/AN people. One consequence of colonialism is the devastation to traditional AI/AN educational practice. For example, AI/AN education and intergenerational knowledge were traditionally passed by oral modes of communication. Colonialism commenced the transition from oral history to the assimilated emphasis on orthographic-based, written language systems. In addition, as a method of forced assimilation, during the missionary and federal American Indian boarding school era (approximately 1617 to the 1970s), AI/AN children were removed from their homes and sent to overnight boarding schools that implemented military-influenced discipline, purposefully extinguished tribal languages, and substituted educational goals for vocational goals (Juneau, 2001). These schools also removed critical parental and family

influences on children and ceased the intergenerational transmission of traditional child-rearing practices. These policies and events led to linguistic and mistrust for federally operated educational institutions such as the U.S. public school system and some federally operated tribal schools, resulting in achievement gaps between AI/AN children and their White, European American peers, particularly in reading achievement.

In 2019, approximately 50% of AI/AN fourth graders and 41% of eighth graders performed below the basic level in reading (U.S. Department of Education, 2019), only exceeded in poor reading outcomes by Black/African Americans. Disproportionality in academic achievement for AI/ANs is not isolated to reading performance. American Indian and Alaska Native children have the greatest likelihood of receiving special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; U.S. Department of Education, 2020). For instance, in 2019, approximately 8.7% of AI/AN children aged 3–5 years and 15.1% of AI/AN children aged 6–21 years received Part B special education services, the highest of all other racial/ethnic groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). The U.S. Department of Education calculated risk ratios by comparing the proportion of a particular racial/ethnic group served under IDEA with the proportion served among the other racial/ethnic groups combined. The higher the risk ratio, the more that group is represented in special education compared with all other racial/ethnic groups combined (i.e., the larger the educational disparity). The risk ratio for AI/AN students served under IDEA, Part B was 1.3 for children aged 3–5 years and 1.6 for children aged 6–21 years, meaning AI/AN children are approximately 1.5 times more likely to receive special education services than those from all other racial/ethnic groups combined (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). In addition, AI/AN children have the highest risk ratios for developmental delay, speech or language impairment, and specific learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia) compared with all

other racial/ethnic groups combined, 4.1, 1.4, and 1.9, respectively (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

ADDRESSING THE LITERACY NEEDS OF AI/AN CHILDREN

McCardle and Berninger (2015) argue that educators have failed to integrate cultural sensitivity with “evidence-based instructional and intervention practices” (p. 1). If we also agree to the NCTE definition of literacy that literacies are “a collection of cultural and communicative practices . . . and inextricably linked with particular histories, life possibilities, and social trajectories of individuals and groups,” then we should be more purposeful in considering sociocultural attributes and experiences of AI/AN children, and other children from underrepresented cultural backgrounds, in an effort to decrease observed achievement gaps.

Role of language and SLPs in literacy

Overwhelming evidence in the literature supports the relationship between language and literacy. Gough and Tunmer (1986) proposed the Simple View of Reading, in which reading comprehension, the ultimate goal of reading, comprises decoding skills and language comprehension abilities. In other words, reading comprehension requires the ability to decode and identify the words on a page or screen and then to understand the meaning of the author’s words. Moreover, although the model appears to parse decoding and language comprehension, educators have learned and should always remember that language comprehension abilities facilitate decoding skills, and vice versa. For example, skilled decoders fluently read text with accuracy and efficiency, allowing more cognitive-linguistic resources for comprehension. And readers with strong language comprehension abilities use their understanding of the text to anticipate, predict, and narrow options of upcoming words in the text, leading to faster and more accurate decoding.

Scarborough (2001) expanded on the Simple View of Reading to include interconnected, subcomponent knowledge and attributes such as phonological awareness and vocabulary. She analogized the interconnection to intertwined strands of a rope (see Scarborough, 2001, for the famous infographic). Supported by research, her reading rope depicted word recognition as a collection of interrelated skills including phonological awareness, knowledge of orthographic principles that facilitate decoding, and sight, or automatic, word recognition. Likewise, Scarborough’s analogy depicted language comprehension as interrelated cognitive and linguistic stores and processes including vocabulary, background knowledge, morphosyntactic structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy-related knowledge.

Consequently, the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), Scarborough’s (2001) model of skilled reading, and a confluence of research have defined literacy as a language-based skill. In addition, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s (ASHA’s) position statement and technical report on the roles and responsibilities of SLPs in literacy established their role in literacy assessment and instruction (ASHA, 2001a, 2001b). Both SLPs and other educators also have collaborated to inform reading instruction and curricula development that emphasize the linguistic structures that support word recognition and reading comprehension. For example, in addition to the alphabetic principle, decoding, reading fluency, spelling, and writing skills, reading and writing curricula should naturally address language development including phonological awareness, vocabulary, and language comprehension. Examples of such curricula are language-focused models of preschool/early childhood programs.

Language-focused curricula

In response to the growing understanding of the relationship between language development and literacy development, language-enriched or language-focused early childhood

curricula (e.g., Bunce, 1995, 2008) emerged. These programs include theme- and play-based activities integrating indirect or implicit language facilitation strategies (e.g., self-talk, parallel talk, expansions and extensions, recasts, focus contrast) targeting phonology, vocabulary, grammar, and social skills, and direct or explicit emergent and early literacy instruction targeting the alphabet, phonological awareness, and early writing skills. For example, Bunce's (1995) language-focused curriculum and follow-up resource on early literacy in the classroom (Bunce, 2008) employ indirect language facilitation strategies within the context of dramatic play, art, small group activities, and interactive storybook reading to target early language and literacy.

As stated previously, SLPs, who are experts in language and literacy development and disorders, have been leaders in the effort to emphasize both naturalistic language facilitation and explicit instruction to address literacy development and disorders. Parents, educators, and SLPs are promoting language development, and consequently the foundation of reading and writing skills, with children every day. However, as evidenced by the long-standing educational disparities of AI/AN children, we are not meeting the needs of all children.

Culturally responsive teaching

The concept of culturally sensitive/relevant education is not new, nor has it focused solely on AI/AN children. In the 1990s, with a foundation in cultural difference explanations of educational disparities in diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups, several educational philosophers were interested in the characteristics of successful teachers who were teaching Black/African American (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1994) and other children from underrepresented backgrounds (see Paris & Alim, 2014, for review). Over time, a growing body of evidence has emerged to acknowledge the cultural and linguistic differences (e.g., dialectal, social communication, relevant content) between classrooms

and children and families from diverse communities. The movement, to address disproportionality and the academic achievement gap by centering the heritage cultural assets of communities of color, resulted in a theory of CRT and analogous concepts such as culturally sensitive pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy, and cultural-based education, among others (see Paris & Alim, 2014, for review).

In the book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, Geneva Gay (2010) defined CRT "as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 31). Gay compiled the ideas of a variety of scholars to identify six characteristics of CRT. Gay stated that CRT is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformational, and emancipatory. Culturally responsive teaching *validates* students' cultures by acknowledging, embracing, and connecting their home experiences to their classroom experiences. Culturally responsive teaching is *comprehensive* and *multidimensional* by holistically addressing the child through and beyond classroom and curricular content to maintain their identity and social-emotional well-being. Culturally responsive teaching should be infused in the educational climate of all classrooms and educational spaces of the school, in assessment and instruction, and in content and process and not solely implemented for students of underrepresented ethnic groups. Culturally responsive teaching *empowers* students not only to succeed but also to be competent, confident, and courageous in their learning experiences. Culturally responsive teaching *transforms* traditional education methods in public schools and purposefully, explicitly, and respectfully includes the cultural and linguistic experiences of other racial and ethnic groups, which *emancipate* "students of color from the constraining manacles of mainstream canons of knowledge and ways of knowing" (p. 37).

Culturally responsive teaching and its characteristics are applicable to any group of underrepresented students who are in the mainstream educational setting. In addition, CRT is applicable to educational settings that occur outside the home or students' heritage learning environments such as childcare, early childhood centers, public and private preschools and schools, after-school programs, summer camps, and so on. Coordinated efforts and intentional programming (e.g., language-focused curricula) could improve the language and literacy outcomes for all children, but especially those who have been at risk because of educational inequities, such as AI/AN children. In the next section, a description of a culturally responsive program that addresses the language and literacy needs of AI/AN children in northeast Kansas is provided.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EARLY LITERACY INSTRUCTION

In 2005, I was working as an SLP and clinical assistant professor at the University of Kansas. As part of my clinical instruction and services, I partnered with the administrators and teachers at Little Nations Academic Center (LNAC), a new childcare and preschool program on the campus of Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU), to provide playgroups that promoted speech and language development. Haskell Indian Nations University is a federally chartered, 4-year university for AI/AN college students. Little Nations Academic Center was built to provide a childcare and early education service to children whose parents attended HINU. For 8 years, I instructed and mentored undergraduate and graduate students in speech-language pathology to facilitate these playgroups.

Over the years, I learned more about the educational disparities among AI/AN children, principles of CRT, as well as the need to diversify the profession of speech-language pathology. In response to these issues, I wrote and submitted a training grant, titled *Culturally Responsive Early Literacy Instruction*

(*CRELI*). As first reported by Gillispie (2016), CRELI was a personnel preparation grant at the University of Kansas and funded by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The CRELI grant was designed to increase culturally and linguistically appropriate services to AI/AN children and diminish the critical shortage of SLPs prepared to serve AI/AN children, specifically in the area of language and literacy development and disorders. The CRELI grant had two main objectives:

1. To train SLPs skilled in providing evidence-based early literacy intervention to children with language and literacy disorders in collaboration with parents/caregivers, educators, and other professionals.
2. To contribute SLPs specifically trained to provide culturally responsive services to Native American children, families, and communities.

CRELI scholars

Over 7 years (2014–2020), CRELI recruited, supported, and educated 19 graduate-level students (hereinafter “scholars”) in speech-language pathology. Eleven of the 19 scholars were citizens or descendants of state or federally recognized tribes (Acoma Pueblo, Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, Cherokee, Choctaw, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Crow Creek Sioux, Dine’ [Navajo], Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, Osage Nation, Seneca Cayuga Nation, and Seminole). In addition, one scholar represented Yupik-Inuit, who are Alaska Native. At the time of this publication, all 19 (100%) scholars have graduated with their MA in speech-language pathology, earned their Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) or are in the process of earning their CCC, and working as SLPs. The CRELI grant’s first scholar continued his education and graduated with a PhD in speech-language pathology. During his doctoral studies, he served as the CRELI Project Coordinator. At the time of this publication, two other CRELI scholars have transitioned into PhD programs.

The CRELI grant not only successfully trained a diverse group of new professionals but also furnished them with the knowledge and skills to provide evidence-based and culturally responsive early language and literacy instruction and intervention to AI/AN children.

CRELI community partners

The CRELI staff and scholars collaborated with the administration, teachers, and families at two early childhood programs in north-east Kansas, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation (PBPB; www.pbpindiantribe.com) Early Childhood Education Center and LNAC on the campus of HINU in Lawrence, KS. Before commencing a formal relationship with these educational entities, the author developed, submitted, and received approval via a signed memorandum of agreement with PBPB Tribal Council and HINU's administration and institutional review board. For readers interested in working with Indigenous nations, one must invest time in building a relationship with the nation and community leaders, develop a project that benefits the nation, and follow the lead of the nation's leadership council (for more information, see Smith, 2012).

CRELI scholars and staff worked with whole classrooms and individual children. Most of the children in these preschool settings were aged 3–5 years, but CRELI also hosted an on-campus language and literacy group for a small cadre of school-aged (aged 5–9 years) AI/AN children in the Lawrence community. Most of the children in the classroom setting had typically developing early language and literacy skills, so the instruction served to foster their continued growth in these areas. CRELI scholars also were paired with a child from one of these classrooms who was already identified with a speech-language disorder or was at risk for developmental delay. The classroom teachers helped the CRELI staff identify children who might benefit from individualized services. I describe CRELI instruction, intervention,

and collaboration with classroom teachers in more detail next.

Educating, mentoring, and training CRELI scholars

CRELI scholars completed the coursework and clinical requirements of the Master of Arts in Speech-Language Pathology at the University of Kansas. In addition to the rigorous requirements of the program, CRELI scholars were required to complete additional coursework and clinical experiences.

Coursework

Scholars completed a course of their choice from the university's Indigenous Studies Program and a grant-specific summer course with the same name as the grant. The CRELI-specific course focused on the history of AI/AN education, CRT, language revitalization and preservation, collaborating with community partners, the multiliteracy framework, differentiated instruction, and language-focused curriculum planning. Again, these were opportunities for scholars to learn about not only the diversity within AI/AN communities but also the shared history of these sovereign Nations. To meet contemporary challenges, including educational disparities for AI/AN children that were highlighted earlier, the grant-specific course connected historical trauma to intergenerational consequences of trauma for addressing early language and literacy development and culturally responsive services within speech-language pathology.

Field experience

Also, for the length of their 2-year program, CRELI scholars completed an additional clinical experience called a field experience. At CRELI orientation, scholars were assigned to the location of their field experience, LNAC, PBPB, campus playgroups, or a combination thereof. The CRELI staff paired first-year scholars with second-year scholars at the field experience sites, and scholar pairs were supervised by the CRELI staff, all licensed and certified

SLPs. The pairing of scholars provided scholar-to-scholar mentoring to complement the mentoring they were receiving from CRELI staff. This intentional collaborative experience also broadened to CRELI's work with administrators and educators at LNAAC and PBPB. CRELI scholars developed curriculum units and intervention plans centered on AI/AN themes from a children's storybook (see the "CRELI Curriculum Units" section later). During their time at the sites, scholars implemented the curriculum units and plans while the centers' educators supported the children's participation in these activities. The CRELI scholars learned to develop and implement culturally responsive early language- and literacy-focused curriculum units while also modeling this for educators in their educational setting.

CRELI curriculum units

As described earlier, SLPs are uniquely qualified and integral to understanding and promoting the relationship between language and literacy development. Considering SLPs' child-centered services, meaning SLPs most often perform individualized assessment and intervention to identify and work within the child's strengths and weaknesses, it is reasonable for them to collaborate with educators on children's literacy needs. Analogous to child-centered services, educational philosophers use the term "differentiated instruction," the primary value of which is to individualize instruction based on diverse learner backgrounds, experiences, needs, strengths, and weaknesses. One of the features of differentiated instruction is high-quality curriculum development that considers *content*, or the learning objectives, *process*, or the activities designed to promote learning, and *product*, or the demonstration and evidence that the learning objectives were met (see Inglebret et al., 2016; Tomlinson, 2014).

Culturally responsive teaching and differentiated instruction have been foundational philosophies for curriculum development for AI/AN children in the past. *Northwest Native American Reading Curriculum* (Costantino

& Hurtado, 2006) and, more recently, *Honoring Tribal Legacies: An Epic Journey of Healing* (CHiXapkaid et al., 2014) were designed to ensure that *content*, *product*, and *processes* represented the stories and experiences of AI/AN tribes and no one else. In addition to differentiated instruction, *Honoring Tribal Legacies* included a place-based multiliteracy framework (Inglebret & CHiXapkaid, 2014) that recognized, valued, and integrated the learning environment (place) with multisensory, experiential learning experiences for AI/AN children. To continue this legacy of curriculum development, CRELI scholars and students committed to curriculum development influenced by not only CRT, differentiated instruction, and place-based multiliteracy, but also the previously discussed language-focused curriculum that uses theme- and play-based activities and indirect language facilitation strategies (Bunce, 1995).

For CRELI scholars, their required, grant-specific course culminated in the development of their own 4-day curriculum unit with a central theme. Instead of Bunce's (1995) language-focused curriculum that included weekly play-based themes and daily subthemes, CRELI students used storybooks' content as the central theme and included the same book in lessons across the week. Each curriculum unit included plans for 4 days of instruction targeting early language and literacy development. Each day, the curriculum unit included four major planning components (see later) to promote fun and engaging activities. Every CRELI curriculum unit addressed all five domains of language: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. In addition, every unit targeted early literacy skills that were grounded in language such as the alphabetic principle, phonological awareness, vocabulary, word recognition (decoding and sight words), narrative retell, and writing. In the sections that follow, I begin with the importance and guidelines for storybook selection. Next, I summarize the four major components of CRELI curriculum units: group discussion on a cultural theme, shared storybook reading

activities, dramatic play, and an art/table activity. Finally, I share the work of former CRELI scholars as an exemplar of CRELI curriculum units.

Book selection

CRELI students mostly used storybooks that were written and illustrated by AI/AN authors and artists who told stories from their tribal communities or contemporary stories that represented their culture. Some authors wrote stories in their heritage language with full English translation or wrote in English and included some words and phrases from their heritage language. In addition to storybooks written by authors from the tribal nation represented in the story, CRELI staff and scholars followed book selection guidelines from various sources (e.g., Seale & Slapin, 2006; Oyate at <http://www.oyate.org>) such as avoiding overgeneralized stereotypes, portrayal of AI/ANs as people of the past, and European American perspectives on Indigenous people, to name just a few.

Group discussion of a cultural theme

Most preschool and early elementary schools begin their day with a circle time and calendar discussion. For CRELI curriculum units, this circle time also was an opportunity to discuss a cultural theme related to that week's storybook. For example, if the story had themes related to animals, nature, and the environment, the planned discussions were related to local geographic features or animals and their importance or how the geographic features and animals in the story differed from those in the children's locale. If the story included themes related to people, daily life, and family, the planned discussions were related to identity, kinship, family dynamics, history, family traditions, and so on. The topics of these group discussions often changed from day to day unless it was anticipated that these discussions needed repetition or expansion. For the book *Berry Magic*, Dr. Allison-Burbank, a former CRELI scholar and subsequent project coordinator who developed the curriculum

unit described in this article, identified the Alaskan tundra, wildlife, and weather as important concepts (i.e., vocabulary), especially for preschoolers in Kansas. It was an opportunity to compare/contrast Alaska with their local ecosystem.

Shared storybook reading

The literature supporting interactive or shared storybook reading to teach and facilitate early language and literacy development is robust and growing. Interactive or shared storybook reading is an evidence-based practice used by adults (e.g., parents, teachers, caregivers) when reading or interacting with children and a storybook (Ezell & Justice, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Shared storybook reading is interactive in that it engages children in conversation or dialogue about various aspects of the story. Shared storybook reading can be used to target print awareness, vocabulary, narrative macrostructure and comprehension, conversational skills, and other aspects of early language and literacy development. While the cultural discussion topics described earlier allowed scholars/teachers to introduce themes and concepts from the story, shared storybook reading purposefully targeted daily, specific early language and literacy objectives. Table 1 displays CRELI language and literacy targets.

Day 1—Monday

On the first day of each unit, scholars selected approximately five Tier 2 vocabulary (semantics) from the story to teach and target throughout the week. Tier 2 vocabulary are useful words that likely appear across different types of texts but are not high-frequency, everyday words that most children know (Tier 1) or narrow, subject-specific words (Tier 3) such as *photosynthesis* or *rhombus* (Beck et al., 2002). Each curriculum unit has a list of Tier 2 vocabulary, often categorized by parts of speech (e.g., noun, verb, adverb, adjective). Although not listed in his curriculum unit weekly overview, Dr. Allison-Burbank suggested dozens of Tier 2 options

Table 1. Examples of CRELI language and literacy targets

Language and Literacy Domain	Example Target Skills
Phonology	Sound-letter correspondence, phonological awareness
Morphology	Bound morphemes such as past tense <i>-ed</i> , present progressive <i>-ing</i> , plural <i>-s/-es</i>
Syntax	Answering questions, conversation, story retell
Semantics	Tier 2 vocabulary, narrative macrostructure, answering questions
Pragmatics	Narrative macrostructure, story retell, conversation, answering questions
Word Recognition	Sound-letter correspondence, phonological awareness, letter recognition and naming, decoding, sight word recognition
Comprehension	Story retell, answering questions
Writing	Grasping a writing implement, drawing pictures, letter tracing, writing their name

Note. CRELI = Culturally Responsive Early Literacy Instruction.

such as *plump*, *stitch*, *peek*, and *tundra*. Scholars presented these words with visual representations of the concept, with child-friendly definitions, with synonyms and/or antonyms to contrast with other words, and within the context of a sentence. Then, during storybook readings, scholars highlighted target vocabulary within the context of the narrative. In addition, scholars often introduced letter-sound(s) of the week (phonology and alphabetic principle). To target the alphabetic principle, scholars presented letters (orthography) and linked these to their phonemic counterpart(s). Scholars selected letter-sounds based on typical phonological development, students' phonological therapy targets, and/or letter-sound frequency within the book.

Shared storybook reading on the first day also included an introduction to the story. Scholars often took the children through a picture walk or a page-by-page view of the pictures without telling the story. The purpose of the picture walk was to grab their attention, make predictions about the story plot and characters, and introduce themes and vocabulary critical for story comprehension. The picture walk also was an opportunity to begin discussing narrative macrostructure (or story grammar) such as characters, setting, initiating events, and so on. In some instances, scholars told the story

for the first time. It is important to note the use of "told the story" rather than "read the story." For young children with budding attentional skills, some stories written for children may be too long or complex for a verbatim reading. Instead, the picture walk or story telling should be engaging, conversational, interactive, and inquisitive. Finally, the scholars did not conduct shared storybook reading activities in one sitting; rather, they were interspersed throughout the daily lesson depending on the other routines or planned activities (e.g., dramatic play, art/table activity, snacks, free play).

Days 2 and 3—Tuesday and Wednesday

The two middle days of the weekly schedule were more flexible than the first and last days. Each day, the scholars reviewed target Tier 2 vocabulary and the letter-sound(s) of the week. On at least one of these days, scholars often told or retold the story at least one time. Scholars also focused on other aspects of early language and literacy such as phonological awareness, morphology, and syntax. Phonological awareness activities included games and songs that focused on rhyming, syllable clapping, initial sound identification, and sound manipulation (e.g., elision). To target morphology and syntax, scholars developed activities that promoted tense markings on verbs or language facilitation strategies

that expanded on children's utterances during discussions, conversations, and play.

Day 4—Thursday

On the last day of the curriculum unit, the scholars commemorated the week with a review of the target vocabulary and letter-sounds, as well as one last story retell. The scholars and children retold the story in the form of a child-led story retell or dramatization of the story with props and scenery. Story retell also may have occurred within dramatic play activities. Because the children heard or experienced the story multiple times over the week, most children were prepared to participate in these activities. If not, scholars and teachers supported children in either participating as a story character or being an attentive audience member.

Dramatic play

Arguably the most integral component of Bunce's (1995) language-focused curriculum is dramatic play. Although most preschool classrooms reduce dramatic play to a kitchen set for playing house and caring for dolls, Bunce (1995) connected the daily or weekly theme to a daily structured play setting while also assigning roles to children and including appropriate costumes and props. Ideas for dramatic play were directly or distally related to the storybook. For example, on Tuesday of Dr. Allison-Burbank's curriculum unit, the children explored the tundra and looked for animals and berries. On Thursday of *Berry Magic*, the children touched, smelled, and tasted real berries and added them to *Akutaq*, or a traditional treat made of ice, lard, and fish, and sweetened by the different berries. Not only are these dramatic play opportunities likely fun and engaging but also the children could experience the concepts and vocabulary of the story, going beyond passively listening.

Art/table activity

To facilitate the development of fine motor skills, scholars developed table or art activities that also emphasized the story theme(s), vocabulary, or other language and literacy

skills. These table activities were ideal for fostering early writing skills, sometimes forgotten in early literacy instruction. Writing skills begin developing long before children form legible letters and words (Trivette et al., 2013). Children's writing development benefited from learning to hold a crayon or pencil, creating pictures or symbols that have meaning, and expressing their ideas to peers and teachers. In addition, sometimes children created props and/or scenery needed for the Day 4 story retell or performance. In Dr. Allison-Burbank's curriculum unit, the children cooperatively painted a large picture of Alaska, individually painted the Northern Lights, and sewed with needles and yarn, similar to the little girl in the story who sewed dolls.

Other daily activities

Every preschool or early elementary educator knows that no curriculum planning is ever complete without gross motor play (recess) and snacks/lunch. These other activities were not included in the CRELI curriculum units because these are routine in all preschools. However, the storybook theme and language/literacy targets could be incorporated into these activities as well.

Table 2 provides an example weekly overview of the curriculum unit developed by Dr. Allison-Burbank. Dr. Allison-Burbank's curriculum unit centered on the storybook, *Berry Magic*, by Teri Sloat and Betty Huffman, a story about a young Yup'ik girl who brings new berries to the Alaskan tundra during berry picking season. For his complete curriculum unit as well as additional CRELI scholar curriculum units, please go to the CRELI website at <http://www.creli.ku.edu>.

Cultural liaison

Because of the culturally sensitive nature of some stories, scholars and teachers strived to develop curriculum units that accurately represented the culture discussed in the story. Although it would be ideal to have teachers representing all the cultures of the students in their educational setting, it is not realistic. Therefore, whenever possible, educators

Table 2. Example curriculum unit by Dr. Joshua Allison Burbank

<i>Berry Magic</i> by Teri Sloat and Betty Huffmon				
Group Topics	Cultural Theme	Story	Dramatic Play	Art/Table
Monday Learning about Alaska Natives— <i>Where is Alaska? Who are Alaska Natives?</i>	Cultural Identity: Learn about one another's culture. *Yup'ik words, songs, and games.	Picture walk with <i>Berry Magic</i> . Language: Semantics. Literacy: Vocabulary (Tier 2) and sight words.	Story retell through role-play.	Learn about the state of Alaska—Students paint a large cutout of Alaska and learn geography, climate, and AN villages.
Tuesday Alaska wildlife— <i>What animals can we find in Alaska? How are animals important to Alaska Natives?</i>	Cultural Identity: <i>Animals are sacred</i> —Learning the gifts that animals give: food, clothing, shelter, tools, etc.	Retell <i>Berry Magic</i> . Language: Phonology. Literacy: Alphabet (letter recognition and naming) and letter-sound correspondence.	Exploring the Alaska tundra -Students take a journey and look for animals and native foods.	Wet on Wet Picture Books—Students paint with watercolors Alaska animal stencils. Students write or trace letters/words.
Wednesday Weather in Alaska and cold climates— <i>What is the weather like in Alaska? What types of homes do the people have?</i> Reflection— Recalling where Alaska Natives live, how they live, and types of food they eat.	Cultural Identity: Students learn an Alaska Native song and how songs tell stories. *Story of the drum.	Retell <i>Berry Magic</i> . Language: Morphosyntax. Literacy: Grammatical markers in written words and using complex sentences.	Life in Alaska—Pretend play with themes: traditional methods of fishing, hunting, and gathering.	Students learn to sew using needles and yarn that they make themselves.
Thursday	Cultural Identity: Students learn how to make <i>Akutaq</i> and how stories have life lessons or morals.	Retell <i>Berry Magic</i> . Language: Pragmatics. Literacy: Question structures and writing for purpose.	Story retell through independent role-play. <i>Akutaq</i> feast after story retell.	Northern Lights activity— Students paint a large mural of the Northern Lights.

should rely on the knowledge of a cultural liaison to ensure that children are learning authentic beliefs, customs, and values of the tribal nation and limiting the scholars' or teachers' cultural filters. Every CRELI curriculum unit included a cultural liaison, whether it be the scholar, a family member, friend, and/or citizen of the Nation. For example, at the time Dr. Allison-Burbank developed the *Berry Magic* curriculum unit, he was working in LNAC on HINU's campus. Little Nations' lead teacher was Yup'ik and from Alaska. She served as Dr. Allison-Burbank's cultural liaison by informing activity planning, supplying clothing (e.g., *gaspeqs*, or a traditional women's coat; *pelatuuk*, or traditional boots made of seal skin), and pronouncing Yup'ik words. The cultural liaison gave us peace of mind that we were accurately and appropriately representing the Yup'ik culture to the AI/AN children from other tribal nations.

Collaboration with educators

Recall that the CRELI project was designed to educate and train future SLPs to blend evidence-based, early language and literacy instruction with CRT. To further support this aim, CRELI staff and scholars also served as models for teachers and administrators to implement language- and literacy-focused curriculum within their early childhood and

preschool classrooms while also validating the cultural identities of their students. CRELI scholars provided detailed daily plans to the classroom teachers so that they could continue or expand on activities when the scholars were not present. CRELI scholars consulted with teachers on book selections to coincide with weekly classroom themes or if the teacher served as a cultural liaison. CRELI staff and scholars collaborated with the PBPB Language Program for Potawatomi language revitalization and preservation efforts by learning common classroom words and integrating Potawatomi language into curriculum units when it was appropriate. In addition, CRELI staff and scholars conducted annual in-service training for teachers on a variety of topics including speech and language development, relationships between language and literacy, neurodevelopmental disorders (e.g., autism), and classroom-based language and literacy facilitation.

CRELI community outreach

In addition to providing classroom instruction and individualized intervention, CRELI staff and scholars participated in a variety of outreach events to promote early speech, language, and literacy development. These opportunities included powwows, in-service training sessions, parent education nights, leadership symposiums, and other local and

Table 3. Culturally Responsive Early Literacy Instruction outreach events and purpose

Event	Purpose
Annual KU Powwow and Indigenous Cultures Festival	Promoted early language and literacy development; promoted CRELI project and resources
Annual PBPB Early Childhood Center teacher in-service	Trained early childhood and preschool teachers on variety of topics such as speech and language development, facilitating early language and literacy in their classrooms, etc.
Annual KU Native American Leadership Symposium	Promoted speech-language pathology and CRELI project to local AI/AN high school students
PBPB and Little Nations Academic Center Parent Nights	Promoted early language and literacy development
Various research symposiums and conferences	Disseminated information about scholars' research and the CRELI project

Note. AI/AN = American Indian/Alaska Native; CRELI = Culturally Responsive Early Literacy Instruction; KU = The University of Kansas; PBPB = Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation.

national events (see Table 3 for more details). The scholars acquired experiences in communicating with the public (e.g., parents, caregivers) and other professionals (e.g., educators) while also being role models to children, young adults, and parents for the profession and for promoting speech, language, and literacy development. In addition, the scholars learned about PBPB language and culture as well as tribal nations represented at HINU. Finally, CRELI outreach provided a service to these communities by helping them run the event as well as being a resource for parents and caregivers looking for childcare and preschool opportunities. For example, CRELI staff and scholars met dozens of families to whom they eventually provided services or identified a community-based service (e.g., speech-language evaluation) or educational setting for the child and family. The use of cultural liaisons, collaborating with on-site educators and administration, and participating in community outreach all are consistent with the literature on Indigenous research methodology and should not be overlooked.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this clinical tutorial was to demonstrate the integration of evidence-

based early language and literacy instruction with principles of CRT, specifically as it relates to working with AI/AN nations and communities. The CRELI project at the University of Kansas, in collaboration with PBPB and HINU, combined evidenced-based language and literacy instruction with Geneva Gay's (2010) characteristics of CRT. CRELI *validated* the cultural identities of AI/AN preschool children and educators at their early childhood education centers by implementing culturally based curriculum units. CRELI project staff and scholars developed *comprehensive* curriculum units that targeted all aspects of early language and literacy, while infusing linguistic and cultural values. CRELI's *multidimensional* approach went beyond curriculum development and served as a resource to parents, teachers, administrators, and the community in its outreach efforts. CRELI used themes and experiences that were familiar to AI/AN children and *empowered* them to be confident and courageous learners. CRELI *emancipated* AI/AN teachers and administrators to think differently about primarily using outsourced curricula developed for mainstream America. Finally, CRELI joined other curriculum development efforts to *transform* AI/AN education beyond traditional educational approaches.

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