

Name of Applicant: Anora Ackerson

Date of Application: November 11, 2011

I. Requested Date for Proposed Sabbatical:

I would prefer Winter Semester 2013, but I would accept Fall Semester 2012.

II. Statement of Purpose:

Social scientists examine the past, collect data on the present, and use that information to make predictions about the future. The purpose of my sabbatical is to apply this process to study the Mescalero Apache tribe in New Mexico. I received a student grant from Western Michigan University to establish a youth recreation program on the Mescalero reservation in New Mexico during the summer of 1972. I was allowed to do this project primarily through the endorsement of a friend who had been a teacher in the elementary school there and, because of her excellent reputation, the doors were opened to me. It was a rare opportunity to participate in a unique and extraordinary social setting.

The Mescalero Apache reservation was established by an order from Ulysses S. Grant on May 27, 1873 and has been at its present location since 1883. The reservation is approximately 720 square miles in area, and the 2000 census population was listed as 3,156 residents. It was the original home of the Mescalero Apaches, but over the years Chiricahua and Lelan tribes were integrated as their living situations elsewhere became untenable. (mescaleroapache.com)

I have not visited the reservation during the past 40 years and I would like to return to document the changes that have occurred in that time. My focus would be on looking at adjustments in population, social and medical services, and expansion of the educational system.

In my 9th year as an instructor at KVCC in both Sociology and Psychology, I believe that this project will enhance all of my current courses in many ways. Sociology is often defined as the "systematic study of society and human behavior." (Maconis, Society: The Basics, 2011).

I propose to apply the first part of this definition by doing an in-depth secondary analysis of data, using statistics gathered by the U.S. census, the State of New Mexico, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This investigation will reveal statistical changes in the population composition and services currently offered on the reservation. This data will be supplemented by personal interviews with several of the tribal leaders, (including a representative from the tribal council), educational leaders, medical services personnel, and any residents that I may be privileged to speak with.

The second part of the Maconis definition of Sociology has to do with observing human behavior. I have often found that both my Psychology and Sociology students do not recognize the extent to which they are influenced by social and cultural forces, which would include their perceptions and stereotypes of Native Americans. Students

do not always realize the extent to which the society they live in is stratified and how many societal institutions have aligned to keep that stratification pattern in place. I hope that by providing a first-hand account of some of the positive and the realistic aspects of Mescalero society, I may influence my students' outlook on cultures other than their own.

My initial investigative questions include:

- a. What is the current population status of the Mescalero Apache reservation? What have been the population trends since 1972? How has family composition changed?
- b. What changes have occurred in the education system on the reservation? Have there been changes in the population served? What has been the effect of the national "No Child Left Behind" criteria on student learning and advancement to higher education?
- c. What social problems are most evident in the Mescalero community and are the available social services adequate to deal with them?
- d. What are the most prevalent medical and psychiatric issues faced by Mescalero tribal members? Are current medical and mental health systems adequate to meet those needs?
- e. What is the status of older adults on the reservation and what services are available for them?
- f. What are some distinct aspects of the Mescalero culture that make it different from cultures that most of my students are familiar with?

I propose to make two trips to the Mescalero Apache reservation in Mescalero, New Mexico during my sabbatical, each approximately one week in duration. The first trip will be during the month of January, 2013, to gather preliminary answers to the questions stated above as well as to establish additional contacts that I can reference when I am not physically on the reservation. The second trip will be at the conclusion of the sabbatical period (during the month of May) to complete any unfinished data gathering that may remain. During the past 10 years, the tribe has opened the Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort and Casino and I plan to spend at least one night there to observe their operations. The rest of the time I will stay in Ruidoso, New Mexico, which is approximately 10 miles from tribal lands.

This sabbatical project would provide the opportunity for me to connect with those sociocultural experiences that inspired me at the beginning of my educational

journey as well as enhance my current teaching. If I mention my previous experiences on the reservation in my courses I realize that they occurred before most of my students were born. This experience would enrich the content of courses I currently teach:

SOC 102 - Introductory Sociology
SOC 105 - Social Gerontology
SOC 200 - The Family
PSY 150 - Introductory Psychology
PSY 160 - Human Growth and Development

III. Objectives and Narrative Description:

When I first visited the Mescalero reservation in 1972, Native American Studies were very popular on American college campuses. With publications such as "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee" (Dee Brown, 1970) and the popularity of films like "Little Big Man," (Directed by Arthur Penn, starring Dustin Hoffman, 1970), discussion of the current status and treatment of Native Americans was current and ongoing. I was majoring in American Studies and minoring in Social Work which put me even more in touch with information about the history and treatment of First Nation peoples.

This interest led to a decision to see for myself what life on a reservation was really like, and I submitted a student grant proposal to provide a recreation program for children during the summer of 1972. (The process of gaining tribal approval to stay there was more complicated than being awarded the grant, but finally my stay was approved). I was allowed to be a temporary resident of the Mescalero reservation with the understanding that if I did anything that was disruptive to the tribal way of life, I would be asked to leave immediately.

Now, nearly 40 years later, Native American status is often relegated to a few paragraphs in a Sociology textbook and there have been few major works published in recent years that have reopened the dialogue about current issues and treatment of Native Americans. When I conducted an online search for Native American Studies textbooks, the most recent I could find was published in 2005. Another example is found in Exploring Marriages and Families (Seccombe, 2012) which is my current textbook for Sociology 200, The Family. Native American families are only referenced on a partial page, in combination with Native Alaskans, who together comprise about 1.5% of the U.S. population (Seccombe, p. 54). I would like to find out why they have slipped into obscurity as a topic for minority discussion.

Considering the preceding narrative, my objectives for this sabbatical leave are as follows:

1. Do a comparative analysis of population statistics and trends since 1972, noting specifics of either growth or decline in the Mescalero Tribe.

I propose to get the data for this section through secondary analysis of data

using 2010 census statistics, figures available from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the State of New Mexico, as well as information released by the Mescalero tribe.

2. To research trends in family composition, including status and services for older adults, aged 65 plus.

It is traditionally reported in textbooks, etc., that the number of grandparents raising grandchildren is higher in the Native American population because the parental generation need to work in larger cities off the reservation. I plan to investigate available figures from 1972 to 2012 to see if these data remain constant or have changed significantly.

3. To identify and describe current social problems on the reservation and if available social services are adequate to deal with them.

I plan to make two visits to the reservation during the sabbatical period, one week at the beginning and another at the conclusion to both interview individuals in social service positions as well a member of the currently serving tribal council. There is a hospital, dialysis unit, mental health services and alcohol treatment programs on the reservation. Having been a nephrology social worker in the past, I plan to visit the Mescalero Care Center which currently houses eight dialysis stations to discuss the incidence and prevalence of kidney disease on the reservation.

4. To identify changes that have occurred to the Mescalero educational system, including the influence of "No Child Left Behind," as well as graduation rates and advancement to higher education.

In 1972, there was only one school serving grades K-8 on the reservation. High school students were bussed to two neighboring schools districts. Currently, the Mescalero educational system goes through high school. I plan to visit school officials, and if possible, visit a high school social science class. I intend to ask school officials about graduation rates, college attendance rates, and major obstacles towards completing a high school education on the reservation. I can obtain the first two queries without an interview but will attempt to directly interview an administrator and several teachers to get their opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of their school system. I cannot predict how much access I will have to students but will volunteer to teach a class or two while I'm there which will increase the probability of getting student input on the relationship between education and their future success.

5. To apply some of the distinct aspects of Native American culture in general, and Mescalero Apache culture in particular to course content and student experience.

During the course of the sabbatical, I plan to read as much existing literature as

possible about the Mescalero Apache tribe including the following titles:

Drum Beats from Mescalero: Conversations with Apache Elders, Warriors, and Horseholders. H. Henrietta Stockel. Texas AMU Press. 2011.

Thunder Rides a Black Horse: Mescalero Apaches and the Mythic Present (3rd Edition). Claire R. Farrer. Waveland Press. 2010.

Geronimo's Kids: A Teacher's Lessons on the Apache Reservation. H. Henrietta Stockel (with Robert Ove). Texas AMU Press. 1996.

The Mescalero Apaches. C.L. Sonnichsen. The University of Oklahoma Press. 1971.

In addition, I will use the library resources at KVCC and Western Michigan University to access additional papers and publications relevant to the Mescalero nation. Immersing myself in relevant literature will provide a cultural framework in preparation for onsite visits as well as recapture the history of spirit of a place that is beautiful, vast, and legendary. I will also use this resource list to create cross-cultural assignments which are part of each course that I teach.

I plan to make two extended visits where I will stay both on the reservation and in Ruidoso which is 10 miles from Mescalero. During my stay in 1972, I was discouraged from photographing tribal members, but I encouraged the youth to use my Super-8 camera to shoot some scenes of our recreational activities. I will transfer this footage as well as new material to a multimedia "then and now" comparison to show in my classes, during Faculty Seminar Days, and in other educational venues.

IV. How the Objectives and Activities Meet Sabbatical Criteria:

I believe my sabbatical proposal meets all four of the general criteria listed in the guidelines for sabbatical leave proposals.

A. It will enhance my professional effectiveness. (proposal objectives 1,2,3,4,5).

The activities completed during my sabbatical will be a continuation of a learning experience I pursued prior to full-time employment. I had a memorable experience as a college student that I would like to share with my classes along with what has transpired on the Mescalero reservation during the past 40 years. The chance to immerse myself in another culture would be an invaluable experience and it has been exciting just to think about it even in the preliminary stages of planning this proposal.

B. Proposed sabbatical leave will enhance the institution's ability to fulfill its mission and/or improve service to students or other publics we serve. (proposal objectives 1,2,3,4,5)

The knowledge and experience gained during my sabbatical leave will provide students with a perspective on a unique culture that they may not have had much exposure to. The data and information gathered will expose students to a reality not often depicted in the media. In addition, the college and community demands that we are open and affirming of multicultural students and this study will help facilitate a deeper understanding of a more isolated minority group.

C. Degree to which the proposed sabbatical leave provides opportunities for refreshing of mind and body, creative challenges, and/or incentives for critical thinking. (proposal objectives 1,2,3,4,5)

I can think of nothing more refreshing to the spirit than traveling to a beloved place that is vast and unspoiled. Although I do anticipate that a lot of changes have transpired over the past 40 years, I also expect that there will be some level of comfort and peace in returning to a more relaxed environment outside of the college setting and daily responsibilities of teaching. I will be able to reconnect with the appreciation of applying the objectives of my discipline in the real world, and the investigative nature of my study will put me back in touch with my reasons for choosing my life's work.

D. Degree to which the proposed sabbatical leave objectives exceed expectations for routine, ongoing professional development. (proposal objectives 1,2,3,4,5)

This sabbatical offers the opportunity to engage in real-life applications of both sociological and psychological concepts. It requires active research and the ability to compare and contrast aspects of a particularly unique cultural situation. This will translate back to the classroom in innumerable ways, such as promoting greater cultural understanding, and demonstration of real and practical uses for social science disciplines.

V. Grants, Fellowships, and Other Anticipated Income:

I have no outside grant money or sources of income while working on this sabbatical. All expenses, including travel expenses related to completing my project are my responsibility. After completing my sabbatical project, I may recommend that the college purchase relevant library materials related to the study of Native Americans.

VI. Endorsement of Academic Dean:

VII. Copies of Previous Sabbatical Reports:

I have not previously had the privilege of a sabbatical, so there is no report to submit.

Sabbatical Leave Report

Winter 2013

Submitted by Anora Ackerson, July 1, 2013

I would like to express my appreciation to members of the college community who supported me with this project. This includes the KVCC Board of Trustees, President Marilyn Schlack, Vice-President Sandy Bohnet, Assistant Dean Barbara Taraskiewicz and the members of the Sabbatical Selection Committee. I also found support and interest from many colleagues, staff, and students and look forward to integrating many of the experiences I had into future classes. I feel that I have been granted a wonderful opportunity to research, revisit, reinvest, and renew the passion which led to my career choice. The following report will summarize my efforts to achieve the objectives for my sabbatical leave.

Original Statement of Purpose

The purpose of my sabbatical was to re-enter the social and cultural world of the Mescalero Apache tribe of Southeastern New Mexico and document some of the changes that have occurred in the 40 years since I spent a summer there as a Western Michigan University undergraduate in 1972. In particular, my focus was to examine adjustments in population, social and medical services, and expansion of the educational system. Additionally, I had the goal of reconnecting with the culture and some of the positive influences that had remained as part of my memories and experiences during the course of my career. It was also important to gain information that I could transmit to my colleagues, students, and the community at large.

While not specifically mentioned in my original statement of purpose, I hoped to have the opportunity to reconnect with some of the teenagers I had worked with in a recreation program on the reservation in 1972. I saved a box full of correspondence from approximately ten of the students and brought some letters along with me in case an opportunity presented itself to see any of them again.

Activities Performed

January 2013

In preparation for my first visit to the Mescalero Apache Reservation in New Mexico scheduled for January 20 to January 30, I contacted several agency personnel by letter and e-mail and indicated a desire to speak with them during my stay. These contacts included representatives of the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs), the Tribal Council, the Mescalero System of Care, which is the predominant social service coordination agency, and representatives from several religious organizations which have existed on the reservation for at least one hundred years. I did not

have a significant response to my preliminary inquiries but was able to establish two initial contacts to speak with on my arrival.

In addition, I started my reading and media list (See Appendix II) in preparation for the January trip as I had not been back on the reservation for forty years and wanted to have more current information about what I might find. Particularly helpful were the tribal website, the website for the Mescalero System of Care, and for the Mescalero Apache Schools.

During the first visit, I met with my original contacts (see Appendix I), Gregory Powers and Ellen Bigrope, and they helped me locate some other individuals that they thought I might be interested in speaking with. It is useful to keep in mind that outsiders are viewed suspiciously by reservation residents, and it often requires having a trusted person vouch for one's acceptability. I started to accumulate names at a more rapid pace towards the end of the visit and had several people already scheduled for the second trip when I returned to Michigan.

February 2013

After returning from the first trip to Mescalero, I immediately sent thank-you notes to the people who had been willing to speak with me and share both information and their perceptions about social services on the reservation. I documented and filed the various information that had been shared and also continued to work through the reading and media list. I began to develop additional questions that I wanted to ask on a future trip. I downloaded photos and started conceptualizing a multi-media presentation that will be used at Faculty Seminar Days, in class with students, and any other community program that is interested. I realized that I did not have many photos of individuals, as it is forbidden to take pictures of enrolled members on the reservation without approval from the Tribal Council.

March 2013

This month was spent starting to make travel plans for the next trip. I continued to be in touch by e-mail with my original contacts and started expanding the list of future interviewees. As the result of my first trip, I became interested in the topic of Indian Boarding Schools which were popular in this country through the 1960's. Ellen Bigrope, one of my original interviewees had been sent to the Haskell Institute in Kansas City for most of her education and described how it felt to be removed from her tribe and tribal lands. This became a theme with several other older Apache women that I spoke with. I looked up and read the history of the Haskell Institute which led to several more historical books about the boarding school influence on the Native American population (see Appendix II). I also focused on reading books specifically related to reservation life. Now that I had been back, it was clearer that no matter which specific tribe you are speaking of, there are elements of living in an isolated and sovereign situation that have some universal elements. For example, an outstanding image in my mind is of an isolated trailer with a large barbed wire fence containing old vehicles that don't run, discarded furniture, assorted pets and chickens, and a white Ford pickup truck. (I was told that white helps with visibility on the numerous miles of mountainous roads). Of course, these

images are not just applicable to Native American life, but are frequently found in economically depressed areas. I also concentrated on reading and media presentations specifically related to the history of the Mescalero, Chiricahua, and Lipan tribes. They all share this reservation with some divisive elements that are visible from time to time which will be addressed later in this report.

April 2013

I spent the early part of this month communicating with people on the reservation that I hoped to speak with during my upcoming trip. I tried to coordinate a time where I had the potential to see as many different people as possible and that turned out to be the week of April 21 to May 1st. I made specific lists of questions for these individuals as well as looked up as much information online as possible, including statistics through the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the State of New Mexico websites. I particularly focused on statistics regarding health care, elder care, and the educational system because I had heard controversial comments about all of these programs. During the second trip I was able to obtain even more interviews, spend a day at the Senior Center, visit the nursing home, spend a half day at the school, and be reunited with five of the original "teenagers" I worked with in 1972.

Objectives Accomplished

In my sabbatical proposal I outlined five objectives that I hoped to accomplish. Following is a list of each objective and the progress I made in completing it.

Objective 1. Do a comparative analysis of population statistics and trends since 1972, noting specifics of either growth or decline in the Mescalero tribe.

When I was first on the reservation in 1972, the population was officially listed as 1200 residents. It was interesting to discover that currently, using BIA statistics, and tribal information, there are close to 3,000 people living on the Mescalero reservation. Getting an accurate statistic can be challenging because even though over 4,000 persons are "enrolled" members of the tribe, they may not be living there. Some tribal members live in the small adjacent villages of Ruidoso and Tularosa. This sometimes occurs because either their jobs are there or their children attend school there (this will be elaborated on later). Also, there are always tribal members who are temporarily off the reservation for various reasons including: work, military service, education, jail, etc. so the population is in constant flux. What can be said, and will be a surprise to some, is that the population on the reservation is growing. Some of this is likely due to better health care and living opportunities, and there has been some speculation that the definition of what qualifies as Native American (in most cases a one-quarter heritage is sufficient) is responsible for the upsurge in statistics. However, the life expectancy for reservation residents is significantly lower than the U.S. population as a whole,

(Frazier, p.170). Approximately one-half of the population is under the age of 18. Leading causes of death on the reservation continue to be accidents, suicides, and drug or alcohol-related incidents.

Objective 2. Research trends in family composition, including status and services for older adults, aged 65 plus.

During my two visits to the Mescalero Apache reservation, I was able to talk with social service personnel, teachers, and religious leaders who all shared similar views on family composition. The national trend of grandparents raising grandchildren is high (estimated at close to 20% nationwide) and it is even higher on reservations. But I was told and observed that children are often raised by a wide variety of family members and there is not always a great deal of consistency. I was unable to locate any detailed statistics to indicate how prevalent this family configuration is at Mescalero specifically. Many of the reports that I found were vague in their descriptions of the problem such as the following statement in a journal article focusing on "Assistance for Native American Grandparents Raising Grandchildren." (See Appendix II). The article simply stated that "Focus group research this summer (2012) by Native American Professional Parent Resources, Inc., a nonprofit based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, found the issue of grandparents having to raise another generation was one of the top problems on the reservations." (p. 4). At the school, I observed directly how complicated the issue is for teachers who indicated that often children are "pulled" during the day for rather non-specific reasons by one family member or another, and that bus rides home can change frequently depending on which household the child is expected to return to. In fact, it took several minutes at the end of the school day for the school secretary to read all of the bus changes, and Ms. Marquez (the teacher I was visiting) had a pad ready to write them down.

Older Apache adults, often referred to as "elders" still hold a significant position of respect on the reservation. They continue to be the source for the passing down of traditions, history, and language. However, I observed some difficulties that older adults experience on the Mescalero reservation. Nationally, older Native Americans have an average lifespan that is ten years shorter than their mainstream American counterparts. As a result, you are considered an "elder" at a much younger age. There also can be a distrust of the social service system in general. One of my interviewees, Laura Enjady, refuses to participate in the programs that are offered at the Senior Center, which is known as the Mescalero Elderly Program, because she "doesn't like the people who run it." It is in a spacious and modern building that is only six years old, where meals are offered each noon free to those fifty-five and older. I qualified and was invited to lunch and shared a table with three women and one man. They were very open to talking about their lives on the reservation. Perhaps one very unique aspect of the Mescalero Elderly Program is that each Wednesday, two vans take interested elders to the casino, Inn of the Mountain Gods, where they receive a free buffet lunch and \$10.00 in chips. The only drawback seems to be that some of them do not come back on the van and stay for extended periods of time with potentially detrimental results.

I was given a tour of the Mescalero Care Center, which is a traditional nursing home facility

on the reservation that is five years old. The Center has forty beds, thirty-six of which were occupied at the time of my tour. While acceptance of such facilities is still not universal, the staff seem to have a very open and welcoming attitude about family dropping in and staying for long periods of time.

Objective 3. To identify and describe current social problems on the reservation and whether or not available social services are adequate to deal with them.

In my interviews, I was able to identify several recurring social problems that were consistently mentioned. In 1972, the predominant social problems were unemployment, alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and suicide. In 2013, the problems include all of the above with the addition of meth abuse, unsupervised young people, very low graduation rates (which will be addressed in Objective #4), and chronic illness, most specifically diabetes and alcoholism.

The social service personnel were particularly honest about some of the issues they are facing. The Mescalero Apache tribe has several substance abuse programs, several diabetic care programs, and numerous services for families and individuals. However, participation rates in most programs are low and there does not appear to be any consistent coordination among programs.

Health care was mentioned frequently as a problematic area. The hospital, with a ten year old building in a lovely setting has expanded both services and staff. However, it is only open from 7:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m. Several of the interviewees mentioned that quite a few accidents, injuries, assaults, suicide attempts, and health crises happen during the overnight shift and then the individual must be transported at least a half an hour away to an available emergency room off the reservation. There can be issues with medical coverage when that happens. Also, several interviewees spoke of the inconsistency of medical staff, particularly the doctors. They mentioned that most of the doctors are assigned for a six or twelve month period and then move on, not staying long enough to establish personal relationships with any of their patients. In addition, many of the transient doctors are international and tribal members complained of communication difficulties in conveying medical complaints.

The other major health care issue is diabetes. The coordinator for the diabetes program cited statistics indicating that approximately one third of the reservation's inhabitants are diagnosed as diabetic, and another third as pre-diabetic. This is a shocking statistic and accounts for the establishment of a dialysis unit on the reservation with eight chairs.

The Mescalero System of Care is a social service agency whose stated goal is to provide services that strengthen families including working with family violence, psychological issues, and troubled teens. Their brochure identifies one of their goals "to be culturally sensitive to the Mescalero Tribal beliefs and traditions and to the personal beliefs of the family." Gregory Powers, the Director, is a person from outside the reservation, but the rest of the workers are

enrolled members. With such a small community, it can be difficult for persons to come in and discuss such intimate family problems with another person in their community, and worries about confidentiality pose a big roadblock. Since my second visit, Gregory Powers has resigned his position as Director and left the agency.

Objective 4. To identify changes that have occurred to the Mescalero educational system, including the influence of "No Child Left Behind," as well as graduation rates and advancement to higher education.

The first change that was obvious before I even physically returned to the reservation was the expansion of educational opportunities on the reservation. In 1972, the Mescalero tribe had a traditional older brick school building that covered the grades from kindergarten through sixth grade. After that, reservation students were transported to the nearby towns of either Tularosa or Ruidosa to complete the remainder of their schooling (if they finished, which many did not). This division of the students had some immediate consequences. In our recreation program in 1972, the kids were very competitive with each other based on school loyalty and it always seemed ironic that the tribal youth could not feel a better sense of solidarity.

In 2001, the tribe built a state of the art educational complex located on a beautiful expanse of land about five miles from any major road. Currently, there are about 400-425 students attending the school on a regular basis. The school's emphasis is on tribal culture, language, and traditions which are integrated into as many subject areas as possible. Not all of the tribal children attend that school, however, and education has one of the most controversial topics that tribal interviewees discussed. Many students still leave the reservation for the smaller surrounding towns mentioned above for a variety of reasons. Some of the tribal families have a tradition with a certain school district and want their children to attend the school (and play sports) where they did. Some families do not like the significant emphasis of Apache culture at the school, particularly the time it takes away from regular academics. Indeed, I spent two hours of my visit at the school in the gymnasium for an afternoon of traditional Apache dancing.

With regards to the "No Child Left Behind," policy, tribal nations are sovereign and receive educational funds from trusts administered through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. They are not necessarily held to the same rigorous evaluation standards of the general population. The graduation rate at the Mescalero school is much lower than surrounding districts. In the year 2012, the school graduated nineteen seniors which is less than 25% of the group that had entered school together. There is also a high transfer rate out of the school and back again depending on how a family perceives their student is being treated. I spent most of my visit in a kindergarten class which had thirteen students. There are three classes of each early elementary grade through grade three and then the numbers narrow down to two classes per grade until middle school. Since the graduation rate is so low, obtaining an education is always a stated goal, but often lacks the follow through from families who have little experience with high school graduation and beyond.

Tribal members are mostly very proud of their school and several told me that more students were graduating and going on to higher education. Others told me that the school was “a mess” and their children/grandchildren would not go there because they were not pleased with some of the people in charge. Even for the small number of students who leave to pursue higher education, re-entry back to the reservation can be difficult (a Catch-22 situation). Students are encouraged to pursue higher education but if they receive degrees and return, they are open to criticism for being successful and there can be some envy and resistance exhibited by others. Once again, in a very small, mostly closed community, division between families and tribal heritage never seems far from the surface.

Objective #5. To apply some of the distinct aspects of Native American culture in general, and Mescalero Apache culture in particular to course content and student experience.

Before leaving on sabbatical, I asked students in my classes to share words that they associated with Native Americans. The most frequent word by far was “casino.” This really emphasized the responsibility I now have to share what I learned, both through my literature and media search, and from my direct visits on-site. I am preparing a multi-media presentation that includes my own experiences as well as some historical emphasis of the Mescalero tribe in particular. So when we discuss race and ethnicity in Sociology, there will now be more discussion on this country’s original population. I have some observations to discuss about suicide rates, education, family composition, and the personal struggles of some of the students I found forty years later. In fact, one of my students, Willie Mae Smith has recorded an oral history of the tribe and is sending me a copy for use with my students. I am working on a “then and now” multi-media presentation which includes some movie footage from the 1970’s, shot by some of the teenagers, and some photographic impressions I was able to obtain in 2013 (see last page for a sample).

Conclusions Drawn

Attempting to draw specific conclusions from such an emotional and intellectual experience may be challenging. I remember the first day that I drove onto reservation land after being away for forty years. There was a sense of recognition combined with a sense of change. Many more roads were paved, many newer buildings existed, and many new services were offered. The Mescalero Apache reservation is a stunningly beautiful place masking many challenges and divisions. So, although many things have changed, they have also remained the same. Controversies about the American government, the local tribal council, the school, the health care system, and substance abuse are still there. And there are dedicated people working very hard to help make things better for all of the enrolled members. What I found particularly compelling is that despite all of these issues, most of the interviewees I spoke with said that they could not imagine being anywhere else, that they felt ties to the land, the surroundings, and the people, that could not be broken. I can understand that tie because even though I was only there for four months in 1972, it was a connection that I have never forgotten. I do not

know if I will ever have the opportunity to visit Mescalero again, but it will always be a part of me and I am so very grateful that I had this opportunity to become reacquainted with reservation life. On my last day there, went to the cemetery, a place where I had never been before and was able to feel and observe a sense of history that seemed to be a finale for all that I had experienced during the Winter Semester of 2013.

Fulfillment of Sabbatical Criteria

A. **Enhancement of faculty member's professional effectiveness.**

I teach in two different subject areas, Psychology and Sociology, preceded by twenty-five years working as a social worker in the community. This sabbatical leave combined many of my academic interests which will allow me to not only share more up to current information with students, but to also do it more effectively. I have been there, I have seen things, listened to people, and participated in events. Even though I did this as an outsider, I was welcomed for the most part and I will carry that enthusiasm back into the classroom. My goal is for future students in my classes is to have a better understanding of current Native American experience. I am designing opportunities for assignments as well as integrating film clips that will help to convey those experiences.

B. **Enhancement of institution's ability to improve service to students or other publics served.**

At the community college level, I believe that students want to know that their instructors have had some experiences in the real world that translate into course material. Since I joined the faculty later in my career, I brought a lot of those social service experiences to my teaching. The Mescalero experience has allowed me to go back out and learn what has been happening to a particular group of people at a particular time. I have also come to a greater understanding of how social services break down culturally, and how difficult it can be for a first generation college student to complete classes. I have only had two students in ten years that have identified with Native American heritage. I am sure there have been more. I want my classrooms to continue to be open and welcoming places, where students know that learning is lifelong and I that I am still on that journey.

C. **Refreshment of mind and body, creative challenges and critical thinking.**

As a single parent and primary breadwinner, I have never had the opportunity to "opt out" of traditional work obligations. I can think of nothing that could have been more refreshing and restorative to my spirit than traveling to this beloved place. Being in New Mexico during parts of January and April seemed like a total break from what I am usually doing during this time of year and I appreciated the complete change of landscape, weather, and tradition. I started by reading related material prior to my first visit, but found upon my return that the investigative research component led me to expand the information I wanted to learn about, such as the Indian Boarding school experience. I found that being away has helped me examine more critically what I want my students to know about and hopefully care about as they move through their lives. The

highlight of the sabbatical was having coffee with four of my former students from 1972, who shared the trajectory of their lives since I was last with them. That was a very emotional experience for me, one that I will never forget.

D. How proposed sabbatical leave objectives exceed expectations for routine, ongoing professional development.

This sabbatical provided the opportunity to leave my daily life behind, immerse myself in a cross-cultural experience, and spend dedicated time interviewing, reading, and writing on a subject of my own design rather than one assigned to me. I have not done that since my doctoral dissertation and this sabbatical was far more enjoyable. I was able to actively do research on site as well as have personal interactions with people I came to care about. This sabbatical leave reminded me of why I chose human service work to begin with and I plan to bring this enthusiasm back to the classroom this fall. I will be forever grateful for this sabbatical opportunity.

Appendix I – Interview Schedule

During the Winter Semester of 2013, I made two separate ten day trips to New Mexico. The Mescalero Apache reservation is located in the mountains of Southeastern New Mexico and about three hours from the closest large airport in El Paso. I had the opportunity to stay in Tularosa at the home of a relocated Kalamazoo friend. Her home was approximately twenty miles from the reservation which was very convenient.

Prior to the first trip at the end of January, I attempted to establish some appointments before I arrived. This proved to be a bit more complicated than it might seem. Direct letters and follow-up e-mails were often ignored. I had several contact people who helped guide and pave the way for other interviews once I was on the reservation. Sometimes appointments were cancelled at the last moment due to illness, family problems, travel, or a phenomenon I had learned in 1972 which is known as “Indian time.” It simply means that schedules are rather flexible and things happen when they happen, a concept not readily acceptable in other places.

Here is a list of the interviews I was able to complete during my sabbatical.

January 20 – 30, 2013

Gregory Powers, Director, Mescalero System of Care	January 22, 2013
Ellen Bigrope, Director, Mescalero Apache Tribal Museum Tribal Elder	January 23, 2013
Lee Keylon, Social Worker, Mescalero Dialysis Center	January 24, 2013
Mary Serna, Director, St. Joseph Apache Mission Restoration Project	January 25, 2013
Harry Vacile, Coordinator, St. Joseph Apache Mission	January 25, 2013
Sharon Perry, Tularosa, lived on reservation for 20 years while late husband directed Forestry project	January 27, 2013
Frederick Chino, Jr., Mescalero Apache Tribal President (telephone contact only)	January 28, 2013

April 21 – May 1, 2013

Michaeline Ahidley, Director, Mescalero Senior Center	April 23, 2013
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Robert Schut, Pastor, Mescalero Reformed Church (leaving in August after 29 years)	April 24, 2013
Laura Enjady, Mother, Grandmother, Seamstress of traditional Apache dresses	April 25, 2013
Brenda Lester Bigman, Democratic Party Coordinator at Mescalero	April 25, 2013
Cynthia Riedlinger, Program Coordinator, Mescalero Senior Center	April 26, 2013
Jenny Pena, Teacher Aide, Mescalero Apache School	April 26, 2013
Melanie Marquez, Kindergarten Teacher, Mescalero Apache School	April 27, 2013
Laura Botella, original friend from 1972	April 28, 2013
Delilah Shortman, original friend from 1972	April 28, 2013
Willie Mae Smith, Family Project Manager, Mescalero System of Care	April 29, 2013

Appendix II – Bibliography: Books, Articles, and Media

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Snapshots of Mescalero – Winter 2013



Ellen Bigrope



New Friends

Tribal Offices



Sierra Blanca

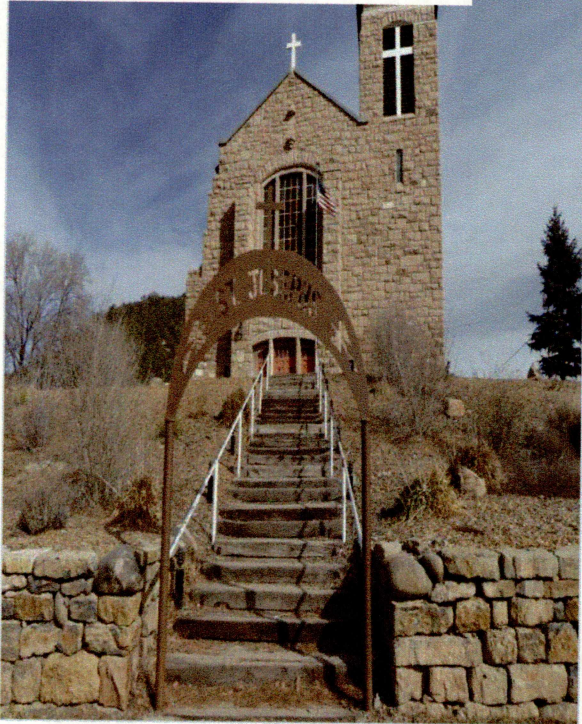


Mescalero Senior Center

Friends from 1972



St. Joseph's Mission



Mescalero School

Highway Grafitti

