Making a Difference in Their Own Way: The Role of Library Directors and Non-directorial Staff at Tribal College Libraries

by Juris Dilevko and Lisa Gottlieb

This study examines the different viewpoints of library directors and non-directors about their jobs at tribal colleges. Previous ties to a tribal college or tribal membership were important factors in shaping experiences of library staff. The findings may be useful in developing successful recruitment and retention strategies for tribal college library staff.

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Dismantling the barriers that Native Americans have traditionally faced while pursuing an education, Native American tribes began in 1968 to charter reservation-based community colleges. Known collectively as tribal colleges, these institutions are managed by the governing councils of tribes and offer a range of two-year or four-year programs of study, with specific emphasis placed on tribal culture and traditions. In a recent ethnographic study of a tribal college in North Dakota, Annmaria Rousey and Erich Longie asked: "What is it that tribal colleges are doing, thinking, or providing differently than mainstream institutions that might explain their success at retention of very high-risk students?"[1] They discovered the answer to this question in the concept of the tribal college as "a family support system."[2] The ways in which tribal colleges function as support systems have also been documented in a series of reports produced by The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC). AIHEC describes the 33 tribal colleges within the United States and Canada as "the educational, social, and economic cores of the reservations and towns in which they are located," and explains that they "are true community institutions—they are involved in almost every aspect of local community life, ranging from the provision of public services to the nurturing of traditional values and beliefs."[3]

The tribal college library enables the tribal college to act both as family support system and community institution by filling these very same roles. In their "baseline profile of the fundamental characteristics" of tribal colleges, Lotsee Patterson and Rhonda Harris Taylor described how these institutions balance "academic library functions with public library services and elements of tribal culture."[4] Cheryl Metoyer-Duran applied an organizational model to tribal college libraries to identify their role in helping the colleges achieve their mission-defining goals of "preserving and communicating tribal culture, enhancing economic opportunity within the tribal community, and improving health care at the community level."[5] Subsequently testing the results of her work by gathering feedback from 24 tribal college presidents, she concluded that "the presidents perceive librarians as the major link between the community and the resources" of the tribal college library, and that tribal college librarians "are agents who activate or actualize the library."[6]

Although the library is symbolically viewed as the heart of many university and college campuses, it is literally so for tribal colleges. Notwithstanding the vital role of tribal college libraries, little has been written on these institutions. Even less is known about what it is actually like to work at these libraries—the daily joys and frustrations and the factors that contribute to both positive and negative work experiences. This study addressed these issues by recording the experiences of tribal college library workers, including library directors, librarians, technicians, and assistants. The study allowed library workers to discuss a wide range of their workplace experiences as they answered a series of survey questions. Taken as a whole, the study touched upon general philosophical issues as well as more prosaic concerns to present a nuanced narrative of communal and professional life in a library institutional setting that is not

often discussed in professional library literature. This was not intended to be a job satisfaction study, although many of the received replies turned out to contain elements that could apply to job satisfaction issues.

Procedures

A survey consisting of five introductory demographic questions and 12 open-ended descriptive questions was developed to explore a variety of work-related issues faced by library directors and non-directorial staff at tribal college libraries. To pre-test the survey questions, the questionnaire was submitted for comment to members of the editorial staff of *Tribal College Journal*. Based on their suggestions, a number of important revisions to question wording and order were made. Tribal college library directors and staff at tribal colleges in North America were identified through the Tribal College Librarians Professional Development Institute (TCLPDI), which maintains a complete list of the names of tribal college library workers worldwide. As of May 2001, the list contained the names of 92 individuals working at tribal colleges in North America, 81 of which had contact information. Initial contact with these 81 individuals was made through an e-mail message informing them of the survey and offering them a chance to decline to participate (opt-out) by sending a return e-mail expressing their unwillingness. Only one person chose to opt-out. The e-mail message also offered them the choice of receiving the survey in print or as an e-mail attachment. A total of 80 surveys were sent out in May and June 2001—71 in print form and nine as e-mail attachments. As encouragement to participate in the survey, recipients were informed that a donation of $1,000 would be made to the American Indian College Fund if a 60% response rate was achieved. The descriptive questions asked about many aspects of their workplace experiences, from the prosaic to the philosophical. The more philosophically oriented questions, for instance, probed for information about their personal growth as a result of working at a tribal college, as well as reasons that would cause them to leave or stay at their present job. The more prosaic questions, on the other hand, asked library workers to construct a "wish-list" for improving the library if they were suddenly given $250,000 and for a detailed breakdown of their daily schedule. Participants were urged, both in the wording of the actual questions and in the informational material accompanying the survey, to view this survey as an opportunity to speak expansively about their experiences as employees of a tribal college library. The results of the entire study are reported elsewhere.[7]

The present study focuses on one particular aspect of working at a tribal college library: similarities and differences between the attitudes of library directors and other library staff (referred to collectively as non-directors) about their working lives at tribal colleges. As previously mentioned, participants were asked to detail the tasks they had performed on an hourly basis over the past two working days. The analysis of these schedules showed that both directors and non-directors undertake similar responsibilities in areas ranging from patron assistance to technical services, from administrative duties to community outreach. To a great extent, this may be because of the relatively small size of the tribal college library, which forces library workers, no matter their level, to perform a wide variety of tasks. In fact, in only one area, collection development (clearly the domain of tribal college library directors), there was a large discrepancy between the daily responsibilities of directors and non-directors. The similarity in the type of work performed by all respondents' leads to the question of whether directors and non-directors also share a similar outlook about their tribal college library employment. Or, conversely, despite the apparent similarity in the daily routines of tribal college library workers, do directors and non-directors have different attitudes about life at a tribal college library?

This issue was addressed by comparing the responses of directors and non-directors to seven of the survey's 12 descriptive open-ended questions. The seven questions analyzed here trace the arc of a tribal college library worker's career, beginning with why directors and non-directors chose to take employment at a tribal college library and continuing with their general impressions about the expectations and the reality of their current positions, as well as positive and negative aspects of their job. While the first four questions are retrospective in nature, the final three questions required library workers to speculate about the reasons that might cause them to stay in or leave their job, and about how they had grown spiritually and psychologically as a result of their tribal college library experiences. As a whole, these seven questions document the hopes, concerns, victories, and frustrations of tribal college library directors and non-directors, thereby providing a window on a relatively unknown and frequently overlooked area of librarianship.

A content analysis was conducted for each of the descriptive questions so as to identify themes and issues across survey responses. As a result of this content analysis, categories and sub-categories were created for each question, the results of which are displayed in a series of tables (see below). The main categories of responses for each question are shown in bold; sub-categories falling under the main categories are shown in normal type. Results were calculated based on the number of times a particular issue or factor was cited by respondents. The tables show both the total number and percentage of responses in each category and sub-category, as well as the breakdown of the number and percentage of responses for library directors and non-directors. Because these questions were open-ended in nature, participants typically cited many factors and issues in their answers. Accordingly, the numbers presented in the tables do not correspond to the number of respondents, nor do percentages add up to 100, simply because one participant could, for example, cite many different reasons for staying at her or his current position at a tribal college library. Using Table 8 as an example, a participant might discuss two main reasons for staying ("sense of purpose" and "personal job satisfaction"). In the tables, this participant is counted as having mentioned two main categories (bold type). In addition, while discussing "personal job satisfaction" in general, the respondent might then mention three aspects of that main category (e.g., "variety of tasks," "enjoyment," and "sense of autonomy"). In the tables, this participant is therefore counted as having mentioned three sub-categories. But, no matter how many sub-categories of a main category a participant mentioned, this participant was counted as mentioning the main category only once. The stated figures for the main categories and sub-categories are therefore to be viewed independently, because the main category figure is an upper level amalgam of the sub-category figures. All calculated percentages are based on a denominator of the number of responses received from directors, non-directors, and total respondents (in the case of Table 8,

Table 1
Tribal Colleges in the United States and Canada Participating in This Study

Name of College	Location
Blackfeet Community College	Browning, Montana
Crownpoint Institute of Technology	Crownpoint, New Mexico
Diné College, Crownpoint Campus	Crownpoint, New Mexico
Diné College, Shiprock Campus	Shiprock, New Mexico
D-Q University	Davis, California
Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College	Cloquet, Minnesota
Fort Belknap College	Harlem, Montana
Fort Berthold Community College	New Town, North Dakota
Fort Peck Community College	Poplar, Montana
Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College	Hayward, Wisconsin
Leech Lake Tribal College	Cass Lake, Minnesota
Little Big Horn Tribal College	Crow Agency, Montana
Little Priest Tribal College	Winnebago, Nebraska
Maskwachees Cultural College	Hobbema, Alberta
Nebraska Indian Community College	Niobrara, Nebraska
Northwest Indian College, Bellingham Campus	Bellingham, Washington
Northwest Indian College, Nisqually Campus	Olympia, Washington
Old Sun Community College	Siksika, Alberta
Red Crow Community College	Cardston, Alberta
Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, Main Campus	Regina, Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, Northern Campus	Prince Albert, Saskatchewan
Sinte Gleska University	Rosebud, South Dakota
Sisseton Wahpeton Community College	Sisseton, South Dakota
Stone Child College	Box Elder, Montana
Turtle Mountain Community College	Belcourt, North Dakota
White Earth Tribal and Community College	Mahnomen, Minnesota

there are 21 directors, 12 non-directors, and 33 total respondents).

Results

Thirty-three individuals employed at 26 tribal college libraries[8] in the United States and Canada completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 41.3%.[9] A complete list of responding tribal college libraries appears in Table 1. Of these 33 respondents, 21 (63.6%) listed their job title as "library director." Seven respondents (21.2%) identified themselves as library technicians, whereas three (9.1%) were librarians but not library directors. Finally, two individuals (6.1%) listed their job title as "library aid" or "library assistant." These 12 individuals (36.4%) are collectively categorized as "non-directors." All but two of the respondents are employed full-time at tribal college libraries, defined as working 30 hours or more per week. Eleven of the twelve non-directors (91.7%) are tribal members or attended tribal colleges. Conversely, nine of the 21 directors (42.9%) are tribal members or attended tribal colleges, and a further four directors (19%) have worked at other tribal colleges.

Table 2 presents four additional demographic characteristics: actual versus required number of hours worked per week; length of employment in current position; previous library experience; and educational attainments. Fourteen of the library directors (66.7%) spent at least three hours more at work than required, with two individuals spending 11 or more hours than expected. The trend among non-directorial staff was in the opposite direction, although three individuals (25%) worked at least three more hours than required. With regard to length of service in their current position, 13 library directors (61.9%) had been employed for five or more years in their current position. On the other hand, seven non-directorial staff (58.3%) had four or fewer years of experience in their current job.

Similarly, whereas 16 library directors (76.2%) had at least one year of experience working at other libraries, eight non-directorial staff (66.7%) had no experience or less than one year of experience working at other libraries. Finally, just under half of the library directors[10] have MLIS degrees, while only one of the 12 non-directors surveyed has an MLIS. Based on these demographic statistics, the overall picture of staffing in tribal college libraries shows a marked divide between directors and non-directors in terms of work commitment, related work experience external to their present position, and formal education.

Reasons for Taking a Job at a Tribal College Library

Did directors and non-directors have different reasons for accepting their present positions working at a tribal college library? As shown in Table 3, the reasons cited by respondents have been grouped into four categories: existing ties to a particular tribe, tribal community, or tribal college; personal growth/goals; pragmatics (e.g., salary, location); and advantages. Thirteen directors (61.9%) mentioned the role that existing ties to a particular tribe, tribal community, or tribal college played in their employment decisions. This was the most frequent response among directors. After stating their particular tribal affiliation, the directors in this category expressed either their appreciation of "working in a Native American library" in general or of working specifically with members of their own tribe. Two individuals who cited tribal ties as a reason for accepting their current positions are not tribal members themselves but had formed an attachment to a particular tribal community through previous employment. In contrast to the 61.9% of directors in the "existing ties" category, only six non-directors (50%) said that tribal ties affected their employment decision. Furthermore, the manner in which these ties are referenced differs between directors and non-directorial

Table 2
Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Actual versus Required hours Worked Per Week	Directors (n = 21) Number (%)	Non-directors (n = 12) Number (%)
Almost always equal	6 (28.6)	8 (66.7)
3–5 additional hours	7 (33.3)	2 (16.7)
6–10 additional hours	5 (23.8)	1 (8.3)
11–20 additional hours	1 (4.8)	NA
More than 20 additional hours	1 (4.8)	NA
Other/no response	1 (4.8)	1 (8.3)
Length of Employment in Current Position		
Less than one year	3 (14.3)	3 (25)
1–4 years	5 (23.8)	4 (33.3)
5–10 years	10 (47.6)	2 (16.7)
11–20 years	2 (9.5)	2 (16.7)
More than 20 years	1 (4.8)	NA
No response	NA	1 (8.3)
Previous Library Experience		
None	4 (19)	7 (58.3)
Less than one year	NA	1 (8.3)
1–4 years	6 (28.6)	1 (8.3)
5–10 years	7 (33.3)	NA
11–20 years	2 (9.5)	1 (8.3)
More than 20 years	1 (4.8)	NA
Unclear response	1 (4.8)	2 (16.7)
Educational Attainments		
MLIS	10 (47.6)	1 (8.3)
No MLIS	11 (52.4)	11 (91.7)

staff. Five of the six non-directors in the "existing ties" category simply recalled the process of applying for the job as a student or recent graduate of the tribal college or of being recruited as a student worker. Directors instead emphasized an emotional or familial attachment when describing the influence of existing tribal ties.

Non-directors overwhelmingly cited the opportunity to reach personal goals and personal growth as motivating factors in taking their current jobs. While 10 non-directors (83.3%) mentioned these factors, only eight directors (38.1%) cited personal goals/growth as deciding factors in taking their current job. Beyond these numerical differences, their comments also suggest that directors and non-directors had different types of goals in mind when they accepted their current tribal college library positions. Directors tended to see their current jobs as a benchmark on a career path. For example, three of the eight directors in this category believed that the tribal college library position would benefit their careers or provide opportunities for career advancement. Another person was able to reach her specific goal of becoming a library director. Interestingly, two of these individuals have MLIS degrees and two do not, suggesting that the MLIS degree may not necessarily be a crucial component of a career path leading to the directorship of a tribal college library. As one director currently pursuing an MLIS explained, "There are many limitations in the library field for people without an MLIS and this job allows me to be a librarian (actually I am the library director) and learn hands-on how to work in most aspects of librarianship." Another person found herself in the opposite situation. She wrote:

> I was working at a public library and had applied for the Director position [there]. I was interviewed and a person with no library experience was hired. Someone from the reservation came in and told me about the [tribal college library director position] opening and I applied. I was called for an interview and offered the job at the interview.

This scenario, in which the tribal college administration went outside the reservation community to actively recruit an individual with an MLIS degree, presents an interesting contrast to the other director's conception of her position as a way of getting on-the-job-library training.

The idea of tribal college library work as a learning experience also emerges in directors' recognition of the opportunities for personal growth. For example, two individuals welcomed the chance to learn new skills, while another said that she was drawn to the challenge of the job. The issues of new skills and the probable challenge of the job, however, are more frequently raised in the responses of non-directors. Indeed, non-directors seemed to connect tribal college library work with a more broadly defined sense of personal growth, with less emphasis placed on individual career goals. They instead mentioned the ability to help people, to learn about different cultures, and the enjoyment they derive from library work as factors that influenced their employment decisions.

The influence of pragmatic factors such as salary, benefits, and location in determining whether to accept their current employment was mentioned almost equally by directors and non-directors. Nine directors (42.9%) mentioned such factors; seven non-directors (58.3%) did so. In fact, pragmatics is the second most frequently cited category for respondents in each group. For three directors and two non-directors, the tribal college library position was their only job-offer, chance of employment, or chance of full-time employment. One non-director who was a student at the time he started working at a tribal college library noted that the job enabled him to combine work and study time. These issues create a very different picture of why these individuals took their present jobs than those raised in the personal/growth goal category. Nonetheless, the responses of non-directors indicate that the rationale behind their employment decisions strikes a balance between,

Table 3
Responses to the Question, "Why Did You Decide to Take Your Present Job at This Tribal College Library?"

Reasons Cited	Directors (n = 21)* Number (%)	Non-directors (n = 12)* Number (%)	Total (n = 33)* Number (%)
Existing ties to a particular tribe, tribal community, or tribal college	13 (61.9)	6 (50)	19 (57.6)
Personal growth/goals	8 (38.1)	10 (83.3)	18 (54.5)
Pragmatics (e.g., salary, location)	9 (42.9)	7 (58.3)	16 (48.5)
Advantages to working at tribal college libraries	5 (23.8)	2 (16.7)	7 (21.2)

*Numbers do not add to N and percentages do not add to 100% because participants gave multiple responses to each question.

on the one hand, the desire to reach personal goals and, on the other hand, the reality of pragmatics. For example, the person who talked about the opportunity to learn about a different culture also noted salary and the close proximity of the college as reasons for taking her present job. Similarly, one individual who welcomed the chance to learn new skills also mentioned the fact that the tribal college library was her only employment offer. In total, five of the seven non-directors (71.4%) with responses categorized as pragmatics also cited issues related to personal growth and goals. By comparison, only three of the nine directors (33.3%) in the pragmatics category discussed these factors in conjunction with personal goals.

Just as non-directors were inclined to strike a balance between the pragmatic component of their decisions and the ability to achieve personal growth or goals, directors had the tendency to strike a similar balance between the reality of pragmatics and what they viewed as particular advantages of working at tribal college libraries. As shown in Table 3, five directors (23.8%) described such advantages, including the ability to make a difference for the college, the small college setting, the diversity of the school, and the autonomy and flexibility granted in their tribal college library position. All five of these individuals also commented that pragmatic factors affected the decision to take their current jobs. For instance, a director who discussed the autonomy she expected to enjoy in her job also took into account the salary she was offered and the fact that there is no income tax on reservations. Another director who described the benefits of being able to simultaneously serve the general public, grade school, and college students within the tribal college library also remarked that the tribal college library position was her only offer of full-time employment. Perhaps not surprisingly, four of the five directors who focused on particular advantages to working at tribal college libraries were either tribal members or had previously worked at a tribal college. In other words, it follows that these individuals would be more likely to have had some previous exposure to tribal college libraries and would be well positioned not only to identify such advantages, but also incorporate them in their employment decisions. This argument, however, raises the question of why only two non-directors (16.7%) cite advantages to tribal college library work when a far greater number of non-directors were already familiar with tribal colleges, either through study or employment, than directors.

Differences between Reality and Expectations

"For some directors, the disjunction between their expectations and their actual responsibilities resulted in a greater understanding not only of their own role in the library, but also the role of the library in the college and reservation communities."

Were there any differences between what directors and non-directors expected their job would be like and the daily reality of working at a tribal college library? As shown in Table 4, five individuals (three directors and two non-directors) found few differences between what they expected and what they experienced, and one director had no pre-conceived expectations. For seven directors (33.3%) and four non-directors (36.4%), tribal college library work actually exceeds expectations, resulting in pleasant surprises. The majority of respondents—14 directors (66.7%) and six non-directors (54.5%)—observed, however, that the reality of working at a tribal college library has fallen short of their expectations. Their comments cover four distinct areas: job responsibilities; job constraints; politics; and student ability. Although directors and non-directors performed a similar range of tasks, directors more frequently than non-directors cited this wide range of tasks as an unexpected component of their tribal college library work. For some directors, the disjunction between their expectations and their actual responsibilities resulted in a greater understanding not only of their own role in the library, but also the role of the library in the college and reservation communities. For example, three directors described their surprise at the unexpected pressure placed on them to apply for grants. One person wrote:

> Coming from an academic background with a stable budget, it is a little bit hard for me to comprehend the need to apply [for] different types of grants. . . . People were coming from right and left urging me to apply for grants then. I felt overwhelmed.

Similarly, three directors mentioned that they had not anticipated the extent to which tribal college libraries operate simultaneously as academic and community libraries, serving not only college students and faculty, but also school children and adults from the reservation, the same factor that was cited by another director as a reason that she accepted her current tribal college library employment. The library's multifaceted service population, in turn, results in equally multifaceted library work.

Four individuals, two directors and two non-directors, discussed "job responsibilities" in terms of the need for a clear-cut job description. They indicated that providing a definite structure for staff responsibilities would dispel the assumption that the tribal college library—and, by extension, the people who work there—can operate as a "one man department expected to do it all." Yet, with one ex-

Table 4
Responses to the Question, "What Are the Differences between Your Expectation (Anticipation) of What Your Job Would be Like and the Reality of Your Job Working at This Tribal College Library?"

Differences Cited	Directors (n = 21)* Number (%)	Non-directors (n = 11)* Number (%)	Total (n = 32)* Number (%)
Reality does not meet expectations	14 (66.7)	6 (54.5)	20 (62.5)
Job responsibilities	10 (47.6)	3 (27.3)	13 (40.6)
Job constraints	6 (28.6)	4 (36.4)	10 (31.3)
Politics	5 (23.8)	3 (27.3)	8 (25)
Student ability	NA	1 (9.1)	1 (3.1)
Reality exceeds expectations (pleasant surprises)	7 (33.3)	4 (36.4)	11 (34.4)
The job is as expected	3 (14.3)	2 (18.2)	5 (15.6)
No preconceived expectations	1 (4.8)	NA	1 (3.1)

*Numbers do not add to N and percentages do not add to 100% because participants gave multiple responses to each question.

ception, only directors cited specific tasks that they had not expected to perform or had not thought they would spend so much time on in their jobs. These tasks include Web-page design, automation, and Internet-based work. Conversely, non-directors mentioned specific tasks in conjunction with how the reality of their job *exceeds* their expectations. Stating that her job is "better than I could have hoped [for]," one of these respondents wrote: "This job provides a much wider and more interesting variety of job duties. There is always something to do, so if I get tired of one thing I can always move on [to] another project." Given the similar range of tasks that all survey participants perform, the fact that directors predominantly cited job responsibilities as an example of reality not meeting their expectations suggests a different conception of what constitutes the work of tribal college library directors and the work of non-directorial staff on the part of respondents in each of these categories. Although the daily tasks of directors and non-directors might overlap, for some directors these tasks represent unforeseen responsibilities that must nevertheless be squeezed into an already overloaded schedule. In the responses of non-directors, there is instead the sense that unforeseen and extra responsibilities mean more variety and a more dynamic work experience than originally anticipated.

With regard to job constraints, both directors and non-directors experienced the problems that arise from limited library budgets. As shown in Table 4, six directors (28.6%) and four non-directors (36.4%) observe that unanticipated constraints have contributed to a discrepancy between their expectations and the reality of working at a tribal college library. Five directors and three non-directors noted that they had expected to find better facilities and more up-to-date technology, as well as a bigger budget for resources and supplies. One library staff member commented that "[e]ven to do a mail out on overdues is an issue. Who will pay for the stamps?" Another wrote that "I worked for two years in the Library with no computers for our students. . . . As a result of this lack of technology, I was doing their research for them." She also remarked that without computers it was "very difficult when giving bibliographic instruction." Three respondents also noted that they had expected a larger library staff and more student assistants. That both directors and non-directors raise the same issues reveals how the constraints of working in a perennially under-funded facility affect the entire tribal college library staff.

The third most frequently cited area where respondents' experiences differed from their expectations is politics. As with the issue of job constraints, tribal politics affects the entire tribal college library staff. Five directors (23.8%) and three non-directors (27.3%) described problems they have encountered with the tribal college administration or governing tribal council. For instance, respondents expressed their frustration at a perceived lack of support for the library. According to one director, the tribal college "[a]dministration for the most part has minimal understanding of the purpose of the library—and minimal may be too generous at times." Although the administration did not fully understand the role of the library, it nonetheless tried to exert its own influence over library operations, a situation this respondent identified "as a tendency ... for administrators in tribal institutions of all kinds to micromanage." The responses of non-directors in the "politics" sub-category focused in particular on the effect that the administration's lack of support has on tribal college students. Commenting that there is "too much politics in the system," a library assistant stated that she is "just disappointed in the system—that no one cares about students, just themselves and their jobs." Similarly, one library technician noted that she had "expected the ... tribal council to utilize the library to help build leaders in their community." In other cases, the issue of politics refers to intra-library relationships. For instance, one library director described difficulties concerning varying work ethics:

> It's still hard for me to reconcile my work ethic with theirs. There are a fairly large number of people at this college who don't do their jobs. If they worked anywhere else they'd have been fired. This has an impact on how much I can get done.

In this particular case, the respondent is not a tribal member, but has previous work experience at another tribal college library. Her references to an unnamed "them" imply a tacit divide between Native and non-Native library staff. This same divide can be found in the comments of a library technician who attended a tribal college, although she herself is not Native American. She observed that "[I]t's easy to give offense without intending any. I have a co-worker who takes even a question about if she has seen a certain book I'm looking for as if I'm asking her if she stole it." These responses seem to indicate that racial tensions exist among co-workers without any particular distinction being made between directors and non-directors.

Heartwarming and Frustrating Experiences

To elicit more detail about what it is like to work at a tribal college library, survey participants were asked to provide

Table 5
Responses to the Question, "Could You Tell Me One or Two Positive (Heartwarming) Stories That Describe Your Experiences Working at This Tribal College Library?"

Central Theme of Story	Directors (n = 19)* Number (%)	Non-directors (n = 12)* Number (%)	Total (n = 31)* Number (%)
Helping others	8 (42.1)	7 (58.3)	15 (48.4)
Receiving positive feedback	7 (36.8)	3 (25)	10 (32.3)
Personal/professional growth	4 (21.1)	3 (25)	7 (22.6)
The tribal college library as a welcoming environment	3 (15.8)	1 (8.3)	4 (12.9)
The determination of students/patrons	3 (15.8)	NA	3 (9.7)
Awareness of Native American culture	NA	1 (8.3)	1 (3.2)

*Numbers do not add to N and percentages do not add to 100% because participants gave multiple responses to each question.

one or two positive (heartwarming) stories and one or two negative (frustrating) stories that characterize their experiences. As shown in Table 5, the central positive themes have been distilled into six different categories: Helping others; Receiving positive feedback; Personal/professional growth; Tribal college library as a welcoming environment; The determination of students/patrons; and Awareness of Native American culture. Both directors and non-directors related stories that exemplify these themes, with two exceptions. Only directors described instances of the determination of students and patrons, while one non-director provides a story with awareness of Native American culture as its central theme. This person recalled the following incident:

> A college student interviewed me about our culture. . . . [I gave the student] a picture of my great-great grandmother and much was shared of how the ancestors lived years ago. It was the first time anyone showed great respect for American Indians. As in the old days a gift was given for sharing such stories. I am told that will happen shortly. This is how legends are told and by writing them down . . . knowledge is shared with others.

In fact, all of the stories provided by respondents relate the various ways that tribal college library staff members assist patrons in their pursuit of knowledge. Directors and non-directors alike described how they have helped college students with their studies, often mentioning in particular the assistance they have given adult students or Native Americans. For one director, "professional satisfaction is always seeing the thrill of helping my own people with information needs."

Table 5 shows that the stories of both directors and non-directors most often exemplify the theme of "helping others," with the responses of eight directors (42.1%) and seven non-directors (58.3%) falling in this category. For non-directors, the process of helping patrons is inextricably linked to a sense of personal and professional pride in being able to provide this assistance. For example, one library assistant described helping an adult student understand the Dewey Decimal System and the library's online catalog:

> At first [the student] was afraid to use a computer . . . to get the right information. It took her a day to get used to the computer and how to read the Dewey Decimal System and all the information that goes along with it. Eventually, she was using the computer and finding the resources by herself. She was proud that she could use a computer and work by herself. This made me feel that I was capable of help[ing] a student learn something new and encourage her to continue to work hard and accomplish her goals.

This person adds that he provided this instruction for the student in their shared Native language. The simultaneous emphasis on helping others and the resulting sense of pride and confidence echoes the themes of personal growth/goals cited by 83.3% of non-directors in the context of why they chose to accept their current tribal college library positions (see Table 3). While directors and non-directors most often described instances of helping others, nearly the same number of directors (seven, or 36.8%) also provided examples of the positive feedback they or the library in general have received from patrons, recent tribal college graduates, faculty members, or administrators. For example, one director mentioned how encountering former tribal college students "is a great feeling [because] they remember you [and] they are successful and usually coming back for a post-graduate degree." Noting that "[f]ormer students . . . return to thank me for my help while they were here," another director explained that "[q]uite often the larger institutions can't provide the one-on-one assistance that we can here." In comparison to 36.8% of directors, only three non-directors (25%) provided stories with the central theme of receiving positive feedback. In sum, both directors and non-directors described feelings of pride at the success of students in the stories about helping others and receiving positive feedback. However, the stories provided by directors within these two categories to a great extent focused exclusively on the impact that their tribal college library work has on students, whereas non-directors tended to describe this impact in terms not only of students, but also in terms of a burgeoning confidence in their own professional abilities.

The tendency for non-directors to reflect on the professional strides they have made when describing their positive tribal college library experiences can also be found in examples from the thematic category of "personal/professional growth." Three non-directors (25%) provided stories with this central theme. Describing "the triumphs and barriers" he has overcome, one library technician observed that "People around me provide me with confidence. With that, I believe I can run this campus even though I don't have a bachelor's degree. The trust of the students is there for me every day." A library assistant explained that "[w]hen my policy and procedures were completed and turned in to the college board and they approved [them], this told me I did the job well." Four directors (21.1%) also contributed stories categorized as personal or professional growth. One of these four individuals observed that she has come to feel like part of the community although she is not from the reservation. Another director mentioned her ability "to operate day to day with two full time staff and a couple of student workers." The remaining two directors in this category discussed their pride in the developmental progress of the library. All four of these stories contrast with the remarks of the non-directors, who focus instead on their own development as library staff mem-

Table 6
Responses to the Question, "Could You Tell Me One or Two Negative (Frustrating) Stories That Describe Your Experiences Working at This Tribal College Library?"

Central Theme of Story	Directors (n = 21)* Number (%)	Non-directors (n = 11)* Number (%)	Total (n = 32)* Number (%)
Lack of library funding	12 (57.1)	3 (27.3)	15 (46.9)
Problems with patrons	5 (23.8)	5 (45.5)	10 (31.3)
Problems with college administration and/or faculty	6 (28.6)	1 (9.1)	7 (21.9)
Problems with staff/co-workers	3 (14.3)	3 (27.3)	6 (18.8)
Tribal politics	4 (19)	1 (9.1)	5 (15.6)
Under-utilization of library	1 (4.8)	2 (18.2)	3 (9.4)
Personal limitations	1 (4.8)	NA	1 (3.1)

*Numbers do not add to N and percentages do not add to 100% because participants gave multiple responses to each question.

bers rather than on the broader issues of the progress of the library in general, staffing, and community acceptance.

As shown in Table 6, negative stories have been categorized according to seven different themes: Lack of library funding; Problems with patrons; Problems with college administration or faculty; Problems with staff/co-workers; Tribal politics; Under-utilization of the library; and Personal limitations. Twelve directors (57.1%) provided stories that reflect the lack of funding for tribal college libraries, recalling the issues raised in the context of unanticipated job constraints. One director observed: "It seems like there is always money for things at the college, but the library is very seldom included." Another person described the precariousness of her library's budget:

> Money that I raise for projects in the library automatically goes into the general fund and may or may not be there when I need to spend it. The library does not have a separate account and if the college is strapped for cash, my budget is fair game.

While non-directors also mentioned the lack of library funding—with the concurrent problems of understaffing, job insecurity, and inadequate facilities—as an unexpected job constraint, these themes did not characterize the majority of the negative stories related by this group. Instead, non-directors most often cited problems with patrons as the source of their frustrating experiences. These participants mentioned difficulties in persuading students to make use of the library's resources, rampant overdue fines, and computer misuse. One person described recurring incidents involving a student with a predilection for pornographic Web sites:

> The student was upgrading three classes she failed while in high school. She knew how to use a computer and the Internet. She was on the Internet constantly looking at the adult web sites. She was warned several times but continued to look at these sites. . . . [S]he would minimize the site and when our backs were turned she would maximize and continue to look at that site. [The college] staff brought the problem to a councillor. This did not help [and] eventually she was banned from using the Internet but not banned from using the library's resources and materials. She found a way to use the Internet by asking a friend to find a site and she would stand behind and look. She was eventually banned from the library altogether.

Directors too noted instances of students visiting both pornography and gambling sites on the Internet. In sum, computer misuse was the most frequently mentioned problem with patrons by all survey respondents.

Two non-directors also described the problem with a lack of parental supervision for young children. A library technician commented on how a woman with a toddler would "let the child yank and pull and tug on one our computer towers. She acted put out when I said that [the child] can't be allowed back there." Two individuals similarly expressed their frustration with patrons who expect library staff to serve as babysitters for their unattended youngsters. While unsupervised children can be a problem in any library, a fact acknowledged by one respondent, it is perhaps a more pressing issue in tribal college libraries given what another individual describes as the large number of "single mothers trying to get a degree." This participant stressed that he always "encourage[s] these mothers to continue their education," alluding to the line tribal college library staff must navigate between supporting these students and not permitting the disruption of the work of the library staff or other patrons. In fact, AIHEC notes that "[b]ecause so many students have family responsibilities, the colleges often operate on-campus day-care facilities for children of students."[10] Based on the responses of participants to the present survey, it seems that the tribal college library is also expected to serve in the capacity of a day-care facility. At the same time, it is interesting to note that only non-directors describe instances where they are expected to fill-in as impromptu baby-sitters, suggesting that some patrons make a distinction made between tribal college library directors and other staff members.

The disparities between the frustrations experienced by directors and those experienced by non-directors become especially pronounced in the category "Problems with college administration and/or faculty." Although the category accounts for the third largest number of stories overall (seven, or 21.9%), six of the seven respondents in this category are tribal college library directors. In contrast, only one non-director described specific problems with the tribal college's administration or faculty members. The directors in this category returned to the issues of administrative micro-management and lack of support previously mentioned as areas where the reality of working at a tribal college library has not met their expectations. One person described frustrating encounters with a former Dean of the tribal college: "He refused outright to advocate for me and for the library, and insisted on personally approving of every purchase. He piled on a hundred make-work tasks that accomplished nothing positive, and made decisions . . . without consulting me." Another individual was subject to unwanted interference in the area of collection development. He writes: "[W]e were getting truckloads of very old books. I was told 'The Library of Congress never throws anything out.' I was expected to keep these books—count was more important than quality." To be sure, it follows that directors would expe-

Table 7
Responses to the Question, "If You Ever Decided to Leave Your Current Position Working at This Tribal College Library, What Would be the Main Reasons for Doing So?"

Reasons Cited	Directors (n = 21)* Number (%)	Non-directors (n = 11)* Number (%)	Total (n = 32)* Number (%)
Personal reasons	14 (66.7)	3 (27.3)	17 (53.1)
Family	4 (19)	2 (18.2)	6 (18.8)
Finances	3 (14.3)	1 (9.1)	4 (12.5)
Retirement	3 (14.3)	1 (9.1)	4 (12.5)
Continue education	2 (9.5)	1 (9.1)	3 (9.4)
The need for a change	2 (9.5)	NA	2 (6.3)
Job becomes available in area of expertise	1 (4.8)	NA	1 (3.1)
Long commute to work	1 (4.8)	NA	1 (3.1)
Professional reasons	11 (52.4)	5 (45.5)	16 (50)
Problems with administration/Tribal politics	6 (28.6)	1 (9.1)	7 (21.9)
Negative feedback	2 (9.5)	1 (9.1)	3 (9.4)
Position sought by Native American	2 (9.5)	NA	2 (6.3)
Staff changes	NA	2 (18.2)	2 (6.3)
Change in campus environment	1 (4.8)	NA	1 (3.1)
Job insecurity	1 (4.8)	NA	1 (3.1)
Role in library is complete	NA	1 (9.1)	1 (3.1)
Would leave only for reasons beyond own control (e.g., fired, lack of funding)	NA	5 (45.5)	5 (15.6)

*Numbers do not add to N and percentages do not add to 100% because participants gave multiple responses to each question.

rience frustrations with administrators to a greater extent than other library staff members simply because directors are more likely to interact with these individuals in their day-to-day work. This would also explain why four times as many directors as non-directors provided negative stories with the theme of tribal politics. Yet, it also bears mentioning that four of the six directors in the "Problems with college administration and/or faculty" category had no previous ties to tribal institutions before taking their current tribal college library job, and therefore they had no prior indication of how these institutions operate. In other words, there are a number of directors who are tribal members and/or have attended or worked at a tribal college who either have not had frustrating experiences with administrators or considered that such frustrating experiences were not, in the grand scheme of things, very important. Interestingly, two of the four directors in the "tribal politics" category are tribal members and two had previous work experience at tribal colleges. Their comments, however, do not focus on one-on-one encounters with administrators, but instead describe more general, pervasive problems at tribal colleges such as nepotism and the competition between satellite and main campuses for funds and resources.

Choosing to Leave or Stay

Given the various positives and negatives associated with the tribal college library, would library staff choose to stay or leave their jobs? As shown in Table 7, respondents cite a multitude of personal and professional concerns that might precipitate the decision to leave their current employment. While 14 directors (66.7%) describe factors categorized as personal reasons, 11 directors (52.4%) cite professional reasons. For non-directors, however, the emphasis is reversed: five non-directors (45.5%) mention professional reasons and only three non-directors (27.3%) cite personal reasons. Within the personal reason category, both directors and non-directors noted that family matters, financial concerns, additional educational attainments, and retirement would affect any decisions to leave their job. Directors cited three additional factors not mentioned by other library staff. One person who drives 75 minutes each way to work suspects that she might eventually tire of the long commute. Another would leave her current tribal college library employment if a job became available in her primary field of interest and expertise, which happens to be criminology rather than librarianship. Two directors also noted that they might just want a change. As one of these individuals explained, "I do not want to get burned out as many faculty and staff are here." The need for change in their working circumstances was not a primary concern for non-directors, who were more concerned about factors beyond their control as reasons why they would leave their current position. Indeed, only non-directors (five, or 45.5%) stated that they would leave their current positions for reasons beyond their control. Two of these individuals provided the examples of being fired or a lack of library funding, while another mentioned mandatory early retirement. One library technician simply stated that "if I do have to leave it would be under protest."

Five non-directors (45.5%) also cited professional reasons as factors that would affect their decision to leave. Two people provide the hypothetical scenario of staff changes and a concomitant lack of co-worker support as a reason to leave the tribal college library. Another individual mentioned that a sense that his role in the library was complete would indicate that it was time to move on. Directors and non-directors alike also discussed the role that negative feedback from either patrons or the administration would play in their decision to leave the tribal college library, as well as problems with the administration or tribal politics in general. In fact, as shown in Table 7, the category "problems with administration/tribal politics" is the single most often cited factor overall. Yet, a breakdown of participant response reveals that while six directors (28.6%) would leave because of such problems, only one non-director (9.1%) would do so. Just as there were more directors than non-directors who had had frustrating experiences with tribal college administrative bodies (see Table 6), the discrepancy between directors and non-directors with respect to the frequency with which they cited tribal politics and problems with the

Table 8
Responses to the Question, "What Are the Main Reasons That You Choose to Stay in Your Current Position Working at a Tribal College Library?"

Reasons Cited	Directors (n = 21)* Number (%)	Non-directors (n = 12)* Number (%)	Total (n = 33)* Number (%)
Sense of purpose:	13 (61.9)	7 (58.3)	20 (60.6)
Making a difference	6 (28.6)	2 (16.7)	8 (24.2)
Contribution to own tribe	1 (4.8)	4 (33.3)	5 (15.2)
Goals/vision of tribal college	1 (4.8)	2 (16.7)	3 (9.1)
Goals/vision of tribal college library	3 (14.3)	NA	3 (9.1)
Work not yet finished	3 (14.3)	NA	3 (9.1)
Personal job satisfaction:	13 (61.9)	4 (33.3)	17 (51.5)
Enjoyment	8 (38.1)	2 (16.7)	10 (30.3)
The people	5 (23.8)	2 (16.7)	7 (21.2)
Sense of autonomy	3 (14.3)	NA	3 (9.1)
The environment	3 (14.3)	NA	3 (9.1)
The collection	2 (9.5)	NA	2 (6.1)
Variety of tasks	1 (4.8)	1 (8.3)	2 (6.1)
The challenge	1 (4.8)	NA	1 (3)
A sense of pride in the library	1 (4.8)	NA	1 (3)
Pragmatics:	10 (47.6)	2 (16.7)	12 (36.4)
Location/no desire to move	7 (33.3)	1 (8.3)	8 (24.2)
Lack of job opportunities in the area	3 (14.3)	NA	3 (9.1)
Have to provide for family	1 (4.8)	NA	1 (3)
Do not yet have MLIS degree	1 (4.8)	NA	1 (3)
Decent pay	1 (4.8)	NA	1 (3)
Too recently employed to say	NA	1 (8.3)	1 (3)

*Numbers do not add to N and percentages do not add to 100% because participants gave multiple responses to each question.

college administration as reasons to leave may be explained by the fact that directors are more likely to have contact with college administrators than non-directors. Yet, again, four of the six directors who would leave the tribal college library because of problems with the administration or tribal politics had had no previous ties or exposure to tribal institutions and were not themselves tribal members.

As shown in Table 8, respondents mentioned a sense of purpose, personal job satisfaction, and pragmatics as reasons for staying in their current tribal college library positions. A sense of purpose is the most frequently cited factor: 13 directors (61.9%) and seven non-directors (58.3%) mentioned this as a motivating factor to stay. While respondents in both of these groups generally defined a sense of purpose as being able to make a difference, the specific direction and focus of this purpose differs between directors and other members of the library staff. For example, four non-directors (33.3%) describe the contribution they can make to their own tribe as one reason that they stay at the tribal college library. One of these individuals explained that "I'm a firm believer that education is the key to our [Tribe's] future . . . I reiterate my own experiences as a student . . . I remind [students] that [an education] improves their socio-economic position substantially." Similarly, another wrote:

> The main reason [I choose to stay] is to help educate the tribe. Some of the tribe members such as adults want to return to school and need help. They have been out of the education system for years [and] some . . . do not even know how to use the library . . . I feel if there is someone around to encourage and assist [them] they may feel more confident and finish their education.

In contrast, only one director (4.8%) cited the potential to contribute to one's own tribe as influencing the decision to stay at the tribal college library. These figures contrast significantly with the percentages of respondents who mentioned ties to a particular tribe or tribal community as factors in accepting their current employment. In the context of initial employment decisions, directors mentioned such connections more frequently than non-directorial staff members.

Both directors and non-directors also defined their sense of purpose according to their agreement with the goals and vision of the tribal colleges themselves. At the same time, directors also felt a particular connection with the goals and vision of the tribal college library—a factor not mentioned by non-directors. One director explained:

> I can see the potential of this place . . . Most of all I would like the library to be here for the people. I would like this place to be an open place for people to broaden their views, their knowledge, for the children to learn about things and a place where they can just curl up somewhere and read.

As well as having a particular vision for the tribal college library that influences their decision to stay in their current employment, directors also mentioned that their work at the library is not yet complete. This sentiment is encapsulated in one respondent's comment: "I am committed to getting the library shaped up before I leave."

In addition to the sense of purpose that comes with working at a tribal college library, thirteen directors (61.9%) also mentioned personal job satisfaction as a reason why they stay in their current positions. Three directors associated this job satisfaction with the autonomy they are given, and three also noted the overall environment of the college or the library. The greatest percentage of directors, however, described the enjoyment they derive from their work and from the people (both co-workers and patrons) they encounter. Enjoyment and people, as well as the variety of tasks involved in tribal college library work, are also important factors for non-directors. There is, however, a noticeable discrepancy between the percentage of directors who cited personal job satisfaction (61.9%) and the percent-

Table 9
Responses to the Question, "Could You Tell Me About the Ways That You Have Grown as a Person (Psychologically, Spiritually, Emotionally) While Working at a Tribal College Library?"

Reasons Cited	Directors (n = 20)* Number (%)	Non-directors (n = 12)* Number (%)	Total (n = 32)* Number (%)
Psychological/emotional development	11 (55)	6 (50)	17 (53.1)
Have become more relaxed/flexible	4 (20)	1 (8.3)	5 (15.6)
Contribution to own tribal community	2 (10)	2 (16.7)	4 (12.5)
Friendship	3 (15)	1 (8.3)	4 (12.5)
Sense of identity	3 (15)	1 (8.3)	4 (12.5)
Awareness of others' problems	2 (10)	NA	2 (6.3)
Have become less judgemental	1 (5)	NA	1 (3.1)
Have become more outgoing	NA	1 (8.3)	1 (3.1)
Spiritual/cultural development	13 (65)	4 (33.3)	17 (53.1)
Expanded cultural/spiritual horizons	6 (30)	1 (8.3)	7 (21.9)
Connection/re-connection to own Native culture	3 (15)	3 (25)	6 (18.8)
Sense of contentment	3 (15)	NA	3 (9.4)
Spiritual bulwark	1 (5)	NA	1 (3.1)
Professional development	9 (45)	7 (58.3)	16 (50)
Librarianship	7 (35)	4 (33.3)	11 (34.4)
Ability to learn from others	1 (5)	1 (8.3)	2 (6.3)
Have become less of a control-freak	2 (10)	NA	2 (6.3)
Have become more organized	1 (5)	1 (8.3)	2 (6.3)
Have become more patient	1 (5)	1 (8.3)	2 (6.3)
Better understanding of tribal college library mission	NA	1 (8.3)	1 (3.1)
Diplomacy	1 (5)	NA	1 (3.1)
Self-promotion	1 (5)	NA	1 (3.1)
Too recently employed to say	1 (5)	NA	1 (3.1)

*Numbers do not add to N and percentages do not add to 100% because participants gave multiple responses to each question.

age of non-directors (33.3%) who mentioned these factors. In addition, only directors referred to the library's collection, a sense of pride in the library, or the challenge of their job as reasons to stay. These elements reinforce the emphasis that directors place on the goals of the tribal college library itself when discussing the sense of purpose they derive from tribal college library work.

Personal Growth

Notwithstanding the vicissitudes of life at a tribal college library, do library staff members feel that they have grown as individuals while working there? And if so, how? As shown in Table 9, a fairly even percentage of directors (55%) and non-directors (50%) responding to this question felt that they had experienced some form of psychological or emotional development. Directors most often described ways in which they have become more relaxed or flexible in their approach to their job. As one individual explained: "I have learned to 'slow down' and not get too excited when things don't go as quickly or on schedule as I had planned." This slower pace is expressed in another director's observation that she has "learned to accept and use 'Indian time.'" Others noted that they had become more aware of the problems of others, more outgoing, and less judgmental. Non-directors in the Psychological/emotional development category most often cite the contribution they have made to their own tribe, recalling similar responses to the question of why they choose to stay in their current positions. Citing the expression "knowledge is power," one library technician notes that she has come "to understand how important it is to be a traditional Indian woman" and to help the members of her tribe "to have the power of a good mind." Two directors also describe their personal growth in terms of assisting their tribe. One of these individuals acknowledges that she "is seen as a role model" in the tribal community.

"During their tenure at a tribal college library, however, these individuals have discovered a particular connection between Native American spirituality and their own personal beliefs."

The majority of directors (65%), however, characterize their personal growth as spiritual or cultural development. Within this category, they most often cite an expansion of their cultural and spiritual horizons. The six directors who describe these phenomena are not Native Americans, although two had worked in other capacities at tribal colleges. During their tenure at a tribal college library, however, these individuals have discovered a particular connection between Native American spirituality and their own personal beliefs. One person writes that "I have grown into a more spiritual person because of contact with a wonderfully diverse cultural group." Another comments that " I have found Native spirituality more compatible with my belief system than Christianity." One director who is Native American explained that her job provides a spiritual bulwark that prevents her from dwelling on the social problems found on the reservation. In contrast, the majority of non-directors in the "spiritual/cultural development" category cite a reconnection with their own Native American culture rather than the discovery of different cultural or spiritual horizons. Yet, overall, only 33.3% of non-directors cited spiritual or cultural development as a particular manifestation of their per-

sonal growth since working at a tribal college library.

Instead, the majority of non-directors (58.3%) emphasized that their sense of personal growth can be attributed to professional development. These individuals discuss various facets of librarianship, especially their increasing recognition of the importance of listening to patrons and asking them questions. One person explained that "I pay a lot more attention to how people behave so I can respond to their ways to some degree." Another wrote that the process of observing people has led her to a better understanding of how to deal with the various literacy levels of patrons. At the same time, two individuals—one director and one library technician—described how they have learned from others. In fact, the director concluded that "I learned I really don't know everything." Interestingly, many directors who cited professional development as their main way of personal growth did so in terms such as "have become more patient," "have become less of a control freak," have developed an "ability to learn from others," and have learned "diplomacy."

Discussion

The accounts provided by all library staff members indicate a number of recurring themes that transcend the distinction between directors and non-directors. The lack of library funding, for example, contributes to unanticipated job constraints and frustrating experiences for both directors and non-directorial staff alike. In a recent AIHEC study of tribal college alumni satisfaction with their education, 70% of the graduates surveyed were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the library facilities at their school.[11] Although this is a substantial percentage, library facilities placed seventh out of the nine aspects of tribal colleges examined, with only career counseling and job placement services having lower percentages of satisfied alumni. The AIHEC concludes that "[m]ost Tribal Colleges have few financial resources, and cannot provide adequate, up-to-date library . . . facilities for their students."[12] Survey respondents in the present study expressed similar sentiments, and commented explicitly about the sense of frustration that stems from inadequate funding.

Directors and non-directors also described problems concerning tribal politics and the college administration in response to a number of survey questions. Yet, although both groups of respondents note that these problems created a disjunction between their expectations of working at a tribal college library and their actual experiences, the issues surrounding tribal politics played a more significant role for a much larger percentage of directors than non-directors. In addition to being the source of frustrating experiences for directors, tribal politics also was the most frequently cited factor for why library directors might choose to leave their current positions. In each of these examples, however, discussion of tribal politics is confined to the responses of those directors who had no previous ties to tribal colleges and/or are not tribal members themselves. This suggests that both the particular responsibilities associated with being a library director and previous exposure to tribal institutions might affect the reactions of library directors to the tribal college system.

In fact, previous ties to tribal colleges and tribal membership are factors that color both directors' and non-directors' tribal college library experiences. For directors, these connections were instrumental in choosing to accept their current positions. Yet, when looking ahead to why they would choose to stay at the tribal college library, it is non-directors who draw on the impact of their tribal ties, noting in particular the contribution they can make to their own tribe. For non-directors, the actual day-to-day experiences of working at the library have awakened a sense of their potential to serve as role models in their community and to reinforce the goals of the tribal college. At the same time, the recognition of being able to make a difference taps into the non-directors' concern for and pride in their own professional growth. In fact, the potential for professional development was not only cited by non-directors as a factor in accepting their current positions, but also contributed to their sense of having grown as a person while working at a tribal college library. Even when relating positive stories about helping others, non-directors express feelings of personal accomplishment at being able to provide this assistance.

While non-directors attribute their sense of purpose to the ability to contribute to their own tribe and to help achieve the goals of the tribal college, directors look ahead to a specific vision of the tribal college library itself in the course of explaining why they choose to stay in their present job. The emphasis placed on the role of the library by directors can be traced throughout their survey responses, from the specific advantages to working at tribal college libraries cited as reasons for accepting their current position, to the specifics of the library collection and a general sense of pride in the library mentioned as reasons for staying. To be sure, this sense of pride in and emphasis on the tribal college library can be seen as a natural result of the leadership role assumed by tribal college library directors who, according to the demographic information presented in Table 2, work longer hours than non-directorial staff. The longer hours and their managerial role undoubtedly contribute to what one director refers to as a "sense of ownership" of the library.

Conclusion

Are there important differences between the experiences of tribal college library directors and non-directorial staff members? And how have these experiences informed their outlook on life at a tribal college library? The results from this study create a complex portrait of the working life of both directors and non-directors. The two sets of portraits are not mirror images, but instead are differing interpretations of the same scene, painted in the verbal brushstrokes of directors' and non-directors' responses to the questions in this survey. While covering a similar range of issues—such as tribal politics, the role of tribal ties, and professional development—the responses of directors and non-directors focus on different components of these issues at distinct points in their tribal college library employment.

In general, "existing ties" to a particular tribe, tribal community, or previous employment at a tribal college was the main reason that library directors took their current jobs. Although directors mentioned the desire for personal growth and the achievement of personal goals as an important factor in their decision, this factor was not as important to them as it was to non-directors, for whom "personal growth/goals" was the single most important factor in deciding to work a tribal college (see Table 3). After assuming their positions, two-thirds of library directors and just over half of non-directors noted that the reality of their job fell short of their expectations (Table 4). For directors and non-directors, this was chiefly because of the unexpected range of job responsibilities, financial and infrastruc-

ture constraints, and the negative influence of tribal politics and college administrators (see also Tables 6 and 7). Non-directors, however, looked more positively upon unexpected job duties because such duties allowed them to develop new skills and grow professionally.

"A detailed job description could be provided to all potential library employees so that they would neither be surprised nor overwhelmed by the broad and diverse nature of the tasks that they are expected to master and perform."

The results of this study could be applied to a number of tribal college library employment initiatives. Given the acknowledged difficulty in finding qualified tribal college library staff,[13] the different emphasis placed on issues by directors and non-directors suggests that particular aspects of working at tribal college libraries can also be emphasized and incorporated in the recruitment process. For example, a detailed job description could be provided to all potential library employees so that they would neither be surprised nor overwhelmed by the broad and diverse nature of the tasks that they are expected to master and perform. For non-directors, it could be particularly stressed that the broad range of tasks expected of them is an excellent way to learn new skills and enhance their future career prospects. And, because problems with tribal politics and college administration was one of the recurring frustrations expressed by library directors (see Tables 4, 6, and 7), a series of meetings could be set up between potential library director candidates and senior college administration officials so that both parties would have absolute clarity about the role and mandate of the library in the tribal college. These discussions could include such potentially thorny issues as funding, lines of authority, long-term goals, and co-operation.

Tribal colleges often have difficulty recruiting candidates because of their remote locations, non-competitive salary structures, and low benefits. Nevertheless, as indicated by the survey responses discussed above, many directors and non-directors take a great deal of pleasure and pride in working at a tribal college library. Accordingly, the reasons given for this pleasure and pride could be used as selling points to attract candidates who might have been originally dissuaded by such concerns as geographic remoteness and comparatively low remuneration. Some of these compensating factors are: the chance to help others (Table 5); a strong sense of purpose, which includes a panoply of factors associated with contributing to and making a difference in achieving the goals and vision of the tribal college and the tribal nation (Table 8); and the chance to become a more well-rounded individual (Table 9).

Library directors and non-directors at tribal college libraries invest a great deal of themselves into their jobs: 66.7% of library directors and 25% of non-directors work three or more hours on top of their required work week (see Table 2). Clearly, many of them love their jobs, for a variety of reasons. In addition, once hired, they tend to stay: 13 out of 21 directors (61.9%) have five or more years of experience in their current position, while six out of 12 non-directors can make the same claim (Table 2). These figures suggest that tribal college library workers are highly committed and valuable human resources dedicated to the long-term development of tribal college missions. Given their demonstrated commitment to their tasks despite often difficult circumstances, issues of particular importance to directors and non-directors should be addressed honestly and extensively while recruiting for and filling these positions so as to ensure that the next generation of tribal college library staff are as committed and concerned as the current generation. In sum, the insights provided by respondents in this survey can be used to determine and address specific problem areas in tribal college libraries, thereby increasing not only the ability of tribal colleges to recruit library staff, but also retain them.

Notes and References

1. Annmaria Rousey & Erich Longie, "The Tribal College as Family Support System," *American Behavioral Scientist* 44 (May 2001): 1492.
2. Ibid., p. 1500.
3. American Indian Higher Education Consortium, *Building Strong Communities: Tribal Colleges as Engaged Institutions* (Alexandria, VA: The Author, April 2001), p. 1.
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5. Cheryl Metoyer-Duran, "The Role of Libraries in American Indian Tribal College Development," *College & Research Libraries* 52 (September 1991): 396.
6. Cheryl Metoyer-Duran, "Tribal Community College Libraries: Perceptions of the College Presidents," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 17 (January 1992): 366.
7. Results of the entire survey were presented at the Sequoyah Research Center Symposium on November 15–17, 2001, in Little Rock, Arkansas under the title "The Agony and the Ecstasy: Working at Tribal College Libraries."
8. These 26 libraries are part of 23 different tribal colleges. The discrepancy in numbers is explained by the fact that three of the colleges represented in the survey have multiple campuses, each with its own library. Thus, library staff from multiple campuses of the same college completed the questionnaire.
9. Even though the response rate was below the target response rate, a $1,000 donation was, nevertheless, made to the American Indian College Fund.
10. American Indian Higher Education Consortium, *Tribal Colleges: An Introduction* (Alexandria, VA: The Author, February 1999), p. B-3.
11. American Indian Higher Education Consortium, *Creating Role Models for Change: A Survey of Tribal College Graduates* (Alexandria, VA: The Author, May 2000), p. 15.
12. Ibid., p. 14.
13. Cheryl Metoyer-Duran, "Tribal Community College Libraries: Perceptions of the College Presidents," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 17 (January 1992): 368.

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