

The Validation of the North American Indigenous College Students Inventory (NAICSI)

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Introduction

In 1665, Harvard University student Caleb Cheeshateaumuck (Wampanoag Tribe) was the first Native American college graduate in colonial America. One year after his graduation he died due to complications of “tuberculosis” (Carney, 1999). Unfortunately, his untimely demise has been the foreshadowing state of Native Americans in higher education. Since Caleb first arrived on Harvard University’s campus nearly 360 years ago, Native Americans have been a visible, when convenient, discarded population within the higher education academe. Tierney (1993) described the research on the Native American college experience as

[r]elegated to footnotes in books about other minorities in the United States. Furthermore, what little information exists pertains to statistical summaries about when Indian students go to college, their rates of participation, leave-take, and the like. In many respects, Native Americans are invisible in academe, researchers neither study them nor do institutions devise specific strategies to encourage Indian students to attend, to participate and to graduate. (p. 309)

Tierney’s comment on the status of Native Americans in 1993 was reflective of the state of Native Americans in higher education in 1665 and is the current state of Native American postsecondary education in 2019. In other words, when it comes to empirical higher education research Native Americans are statistically underpowered, ignored, and relegated to footnotes or an asterisk.

Since the 1960s, when enrollment for Native college students was approximately 2,000 nationwide (Wright, 1991), Native Americans