

Building Cultural Capacity for Indigenous Knowledge

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Abstract

This paper presentation discusses the development of a teacher educator's cultural knowledge about the Chickasaw Nation, the people indigenous to Memphis, Tennessee, where Rhodes College is located. This project grew out of a Fulbright Global Scholar research project located in Nova Scotia and southwest Finland. The purpose of the Fulbright project, though not directly tied to indigenous education or pedagogy, revealed to the teacher educator the lack of local knowledge about Chickasaws in Memphis and in the local curriculum in comparison to her Fulbright research locations. With the assistance of a community development grant, the teacher educator reached out to the Chickasaw Nation and began a process of forming relationships and developing cultural knowledge and competence while spearheading programming for local educators and teacher educators at Rhodes College and in Memphis. To date, the teacher educator has facilitated a workshop for local teachers and preservice teachers, explored and documented local heritage sites, assisted in programming development for faculty and students at Rhodes, given presentations, and included Chickasaw content in her courses. The teacher educator discusses personal growth and development as a culturally informed teacher educator and the effort to recognize and include indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing at Rhodes College.

Keywords: culturally informed teaching; indigenous education; teacher education