

LEVERAGING THE LAND-GRANT
MISSION TO IMPROVE
NATIVE STUDENT ACCESS

SUSTAINING NATIVE
STUDENTS IN AN ERA
OF COVID-19

INSIGHTS AND LESSONS
FROM CAMPUS
TRIBAL LIAISONS

Leadership Exchange

SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS MANAGEMENT

VOLUME 18 • ISSUE 4 • WINTER 2021

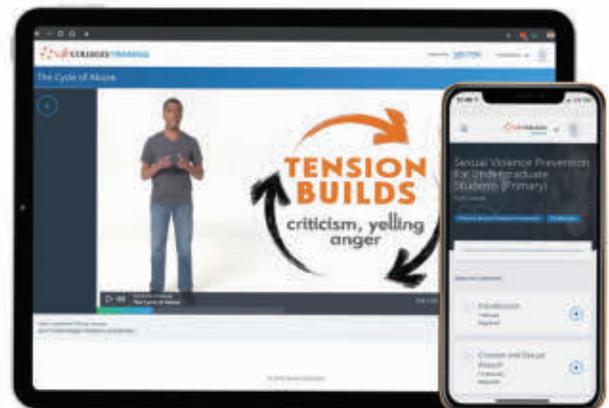
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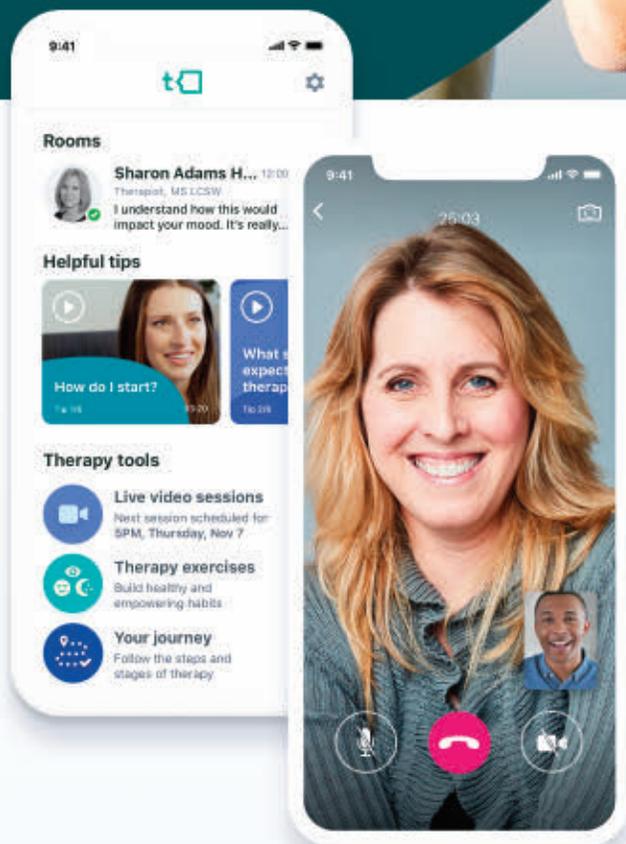
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UPCOMING NASPA EVENTS ONLINE

2021 NASPA Virtual Conference

The following online initiatives are exclusively for vice presidents for student affairs (VPSAs) during the March 2021 NASPA Virtual Conference. Attend these VPSA initiatives from the comfort of home or office in March.

- The traditional, full-day **NASPA Vice Presidents for Student Affairs Institute** involves interactive sessions and guided discussions relevant for executive-level institutional leaders responsible for navigating today's rapidly changing, indeed tumultuous, higher education environment. The program focuses on existing and emerging challenges facing higher education leaders, leveraging momentum created by crises to spark or accelerate innovation and sustaining oneself in the VPSA role to also sustain the profession. Additionally, the institute features the perspectives of former VPSAs who are now college and university presidents.

- Connect with peers during the informal facilitated **Institutional Type VPSA Roundtables**. Roundtables will be offered for VPSAs at community colleges, minority-serving institutions, and small, medium-size, and large colleges and universities.

- Throughout the conference, VPSAs can engage informally with one another during the topic-specific **VPSA Colleague Conversations**. Anticipated topics include: anti-racism efforts to promote equity and inclusion; staff challenges including preparation, recruitment, retention, and pathways; developing career-ready graduates in a post-COVID world; and executive-level leadership transitions.

For more information about the VPSA Initiatives and the 2021 NASPA Virtual Conference, visit conference.naspa.org/about/welcome.



NASPA
James E. Scott
Academy



Celebrating the Indigenous Community

This issue of *Leadership Exchange* focuses on scholarship and research on Native and Indigenous students, research by Indigenous scholars on the power of place, and the experiences of Indigenous students during the COVID-19 pandemic. This opportunity to elevate Indigenous scholarship and research is long overdue. The Indigenous peoples community in NASPA and in student affairs has been damaged by a persistent lack of visibility and acknowledgment over the years.

Across higher education, land acknowledgments are standard practice at most conferences and annual meetings—an important step in recognizing the impact and harm that occurred through centuries of colonization. However, what began as a mutual commitment to honor the contributions of Indigenous peoples and to acknowledge meeting on sacred and historic lands too often turned into a conference checklist item, which only further marginalized the Indigenous peoples community. The intentional inclusion of Indigenous authors in this issue of the magazine is a small step in ensuring that perspectives are shared in collaboration with NASPA's Indigenous members and communities.

As we begin to understand the impact of COVID-19, it is critical to also understand the ways in which this crisis has affected historically marginalized communities. Native and Indigenous students report higher levels of anxiety

and depression, greater economic impact due to job loss and other factors, and declining enrollment in higher education in fall 2020. To address these challenges, NASPA is committed to working in partnership with the Indigenous peoples community to elevate and deepen Indigenous content and engagement across NASPA programs, scholarship, and communities.

The theme of the issue, *Power and Place*, celebrates the practical, yet visionary, book that played a significant role in advancing the dialogue in higher education about providing access to and retaining Native American students in the nation's colleges and universities. Collectively, the articles in this issue will broaden understanding of the connection of Indigenous peoples to place and the importance of not only recognizing, but celebrating, that connection in student affairs work.

This issue would not be possible without Charlotte E. Davidson, who served as guest editor. Charlotte worked tirelessly with authors and institutions to ensure a diverse range of opinions and insights on American Indian/Alaska Native students. Congratulations on a job well done. **LE**

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NASPA President

Leadership Exchange

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Get Impact
Get Support
Get Accessibility
Get Integrations
Get Customizations



Get Inclusive



New Survey Unveils Perspectives of Indigenous Peoples

In late October, the Center for Native American Youth, IllumiNative, and Native Organizers Alliance released the first annual Indigenous Futures Survey conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan and the University of California, Berkeley. The Indigenous Futures Survey is the first of many steps toward understanding the motivations and changing beliefs of Native communities and to correct the inaccurate portrayals and lack of visibility of Tribal communities.

With 6,460 participants representing 401 tribes from all 50 states, the Indigenous Futures Survey unveiled the needs, priorities, and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples. Of those surveyed on issues affecting the United States:

77%

feel that the average American thinks there are no “real” Native Americans left.

87%

feel that the average American does not care about the experiences of Native peoples.

65%

experience discrimination because they are Native Americans.

35%

feel hopeful about the future of the United States.

96%

do NOT trust the U.S. government to make good decisions about the issues that Native communities face.

91%

do NOT trust their local and state government to make good decisions about the issues that Native communities face.



COURTESY OF BYRON TSABETSAVE (DINE AND ASHWINI)

Source: “From Protests, to the Ballot Box, and Beyond: Building Indigenous Power,” Indigenous Futures Project (indigenousfutures.illuminatives.org), October 2020

As Native Freshman Enrollment Falls, Tribal Colleges Respond

Nationwide, 13 percent fewer freshmen enrolled in college in fall 2020 than in fall 2019, according to the latest data from the National Student Clearinghouse. The steepest declines occurred at community colleges among students of color.

At public, four-year colleges, freshman enrollment among Native American students is down 22 percent; at community colleges, it has fallen by almost 30 percent.

More than three-quarters of the nation’s tribal colleges have lost first-time students this fall, with an average reported decrease of nearly 75 percent, according to a survey by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium.

But a handful of institutions appear to be benefiting from the shift to online learning. Tohono O’odham Community College, in Arizona, grew its freshman class by almost 150 percent, in part by adding students from Phoenix and other parts of the state who live too far away to commute. In a typical year, the college serves students from 10 tribes; this year, it has students from 45 tribes, says Paul Robertson, president of Tohono O’odham.

In many communities of color, high unemployment rates are forcing young people to put off college to work to support

their families. Even before the pandemic, roughly two thirds of tribal college students reported experiencing food or housing insecurity, according to a recent survey by the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice.

With so many of their students struggling financially, several tribal colleges offered free or reduced tuition this fall. Some of these colleges, including Tohono O’odham, saw their enrollment increase. Others, like the Navajo Nation’s Diné College, which offered a 50 percent tuition discount, lost freshmen anyway. Diné College President Monty Roessel, attributes the 42 percent drop, in part, to transportation and child care issues. With the reservation’s bus system down, some students have no way to get to campus for those classes that remain in person. Others must stay home to supervise siblings or their own children while schools are closed. To entice them to enroll in the spring, Diné College planned to offer evening classes at high schools to avoid long commutes to the Diné campus. The college also extended its 50 percent discount.

Source: The Science Christian Monitor (csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2020/1120/As-Native-freshman-enrollment-falls-sharply-tribal-colleges-respond), November 2020



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The Benefits of TCUs

Education has been heralded as the great equalizer, but today only 14 percent of Native Americans in the United States ages 25 or older have a bachelor's degree or higher. The key to eliminating this disparity may be tribal colleges and universities (TCUs). American Indian college graduates who attended TCUs enjoy significant benefits over college students attending other academic institutions, according to a new American Indian College Fund and Gallup survey report, "Alumni of Tribal Colleges and Universities Better Their Communities."

The report shows TCU graduates are creating a unique and community-focused life after graduation, outpacing the efforts of graduates from mainstream academic institutions. One of the central findings: TCU graduates give back to their communities. Seventy-four percent of TCU graduates surveyed said they have forged careers serving their communities and societies. More than half reported a deep interest in careers that serve their communities, and more than half of TCU graduates report they are deeply interested in the work they do (53 percent) and half (50 percent) say they have the opportunity



to do work that interests them, compared to 38 percent and 37 percent of college graduates nationally.

TCU graduates are more likely to state their education was worth the cost—67 percent as opposed to 39 percent of college graduates nationally. Only three percent of TCU graduates took student loans compared to 19 percent of students nationally, leaving them debt free as they pursue their preferred careers after graduation.

Survey results also indicate TCU graduates are thriving in all aspects of well-being. TCU graduates reported nearly twice as much as graduates nationwide that they are thriving financially, socially, and in their communities and careers.

Source: "Alumni of Tribal Colleges and Universities Better Their Communities," American Indian College Fund and Gallup, 2020

COURTESY OF CHARLOTTE E. DAVIDSON (DINÉ/THREE AFFILIATED TRIBES—MANDAN, HIDASTA, AND ARIKARA)

Study Shows Homelessness, Hunger Hinder TCU Students

Native American students studying at tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) located in remote, rural, reservation communities experienced food and housing insecurity and homelessness at much greater rates than other college students, according to the Tribal Colleges and Universities #RealCollege Survey 2020. Led by the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice (hope4college.com) at Temple University with the support of the American Indian College Fund, the survey is a five-year effort to research food and housing security of college students nationwide.

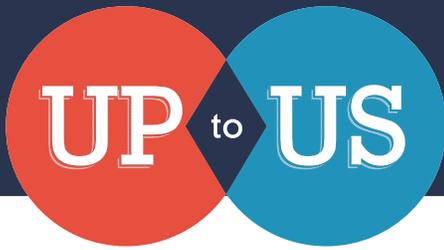
The national survey was completed by 1,050 students at seven TCUs located in seven states across the Midwest, Southwest, and Great Plains regions to ensure that TCUs and agencies and organizations that serve them better understand the basic needs TCU students face. Twenty-nine percent of TCU student survey respondents were homeless at some point in the prior 12 months, almost 62 percent were food insecure in the prior 30 days, and 69 percent faced housing insecurity in the prior 12 months. These rates are substantially higher than those observed for non-TCUs. The Hope Center reports that 39 percent of national survey participants experienced food

insecurity, 46 percent experienced housing insecurity, and 17 percent experienced homelessness.

The #RealCollege Survey response rate of 1,050 students represents about 21.4 percent of the total number of students contacted for the survey, which was higher than the 8.4 percent national response rate in the fall survey of other institutions, according to the Hope Center.

There are many interconnected reasons TCU students face greater basic needs insecurity than other groups, such as limited economic opportunities in remote, rural reservation communities; a minimum wage that has not kept up with cost-of-living increases; higher rates of poverty among American Indians and Alaska Natives as compared to other groups; financial aid increases lagging behind cost-of-living increases; many students who are parents or are supporting other family members in Native communities where it is tradition for extended families to live together and support one another; and a limited social safety net, to name a few.

Source: American Indian College Fund (collegefund.org/research/new-study-shows-hunger-homelessness-hinder-tcu-students/), March 2020



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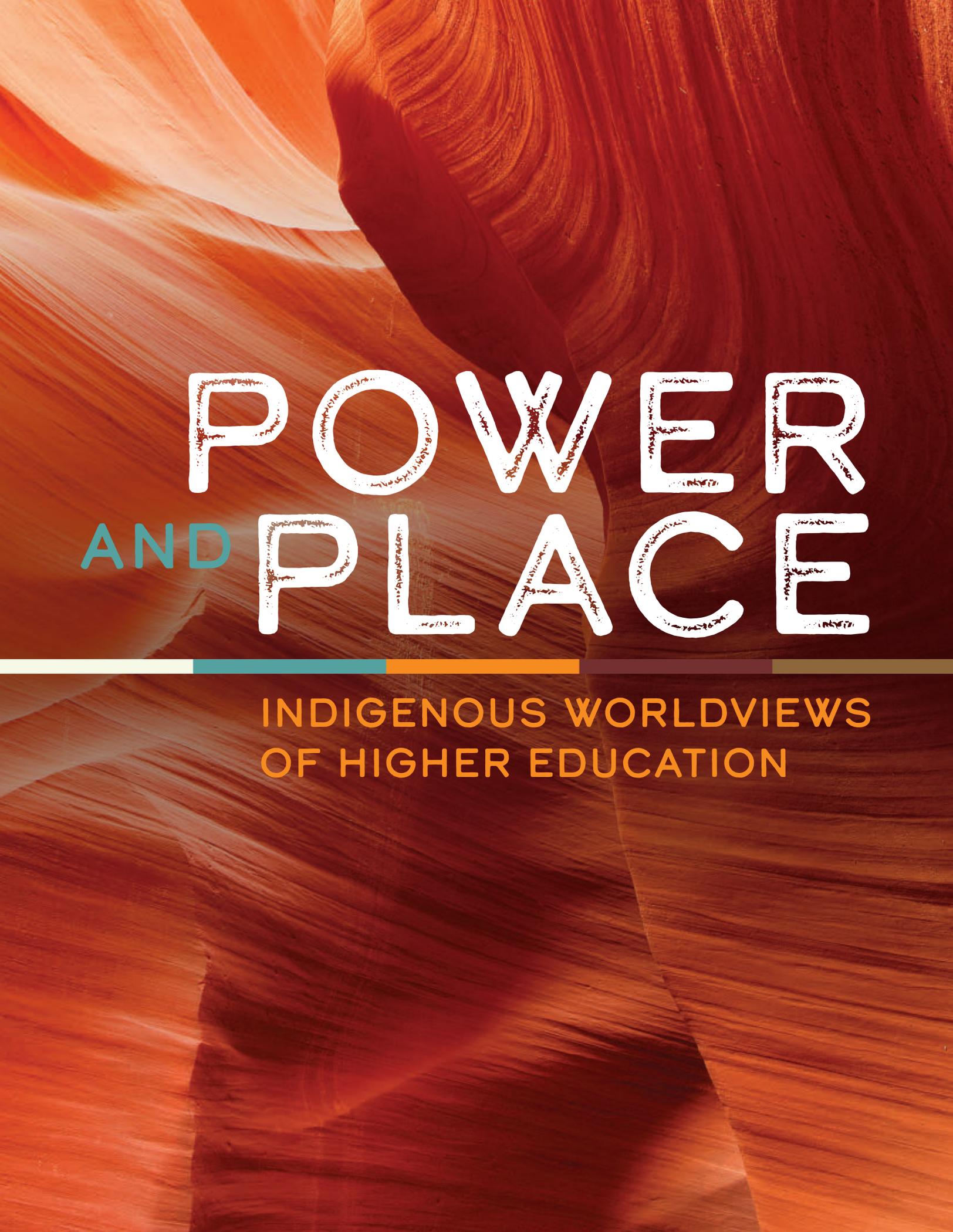
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POWER AND PLACE

INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS
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Power and Place: Indian Education in America (Fulcrum, 2001) was authored 20 years ago by Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux) and Daniel Wildcat (Yuchi Member of the Muscogee Nation of Oklahoma). The goal was to provide a sketch of what was lacking for American Indians in so-called Indian education: an education philosophy grounded in Indigenous intellectual and cultural traditions, a view supported by their history of surviving in colonized educational contexts, and discussions in relation to understanding contemporary Indigenous student development. All of these facts speak to the significance of *Leadership Exchange's* first-time focus on Indigenous voices in student affairs and higher education administration.

Historical Context of Native Peoples and Education

The off-reservation Indian boarding schools during the last decades of the 19th century embraced Captain Richard Henry Pratt's motto for education "Kill the Indian, save the man," a sentiment rightfully chilling to hear in this enlightened epoch of diversity awareness. Indian education—a term still used by the U.S. government to describe the federal management of various elementary and secondary schools, as well as postsecondary institutions supported by the Bureau of Indian Education, a division of the Department of the Interior—through the 1930s was little more than a military school version of western society's education system for Native peoples. In many instances, schooling was often cruel and traumatic—genocidal methods, such as physically punishing students for speaking their Indigenous languages and replacing Indigenous worldview

practices with Christianity, were employed to strip Native children of their cultural identities. Given Native peoples' experiences with Western forms of education, few will challenge their right to address changes for a more equitable, inclusive, and just education system.

Contemporary Portrait of Indigenous Peoples

No short answer exists in defining the characteristics of Indigenous peoples. The 2010 U.S. census reported 5.2 million people identified as American Indian and Alaska Native, representing approximately two percent of the total population. More than 500 federally recognized tribes are in the United States; 266 of those tribes are in Alaska. Not all tribes have a reservation or rancheria, a designation exclusive to California. Federal recognition provides land rights, legal protections, and services such as education, health care, and

housing. Native Hawaiians are provided some services and are included in some laws addressing American Indians and Alaska Natives.

American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are U.S. territories. However, prior to their possession, Indigenous peoples, such as the Samoan, Chamorro, and Taíno, were the principal inhabitants and stewards of these lands. Despite the definitions that exist under the U.S. legal system, Indigenous, simply stated, is to be of place.

“Seeding the 3P principle requires forging relationships, an intentional practice that involves personal and communal exchanges.”

Participation in Higher Education

The National Center for Education Statistics reports college and university enrollment of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students more than doubled from 76,100 in 1976 to 166,000 in 2002. By 2006, a notable gender gap emerged: American Indian females constituted 61 percent (110,000) of the total number of AI/AN students enrolled in higher education. *The Chronicle of Higher Education 2019–20 Almanac of Higher Education* reported in 2019 that AI/AN students represented 1.9 percent of the total enrollment at four-year colleges and universities in fall 2017. In the same year, AI/AN staff comprised 0.8 percent (1,281) of 157,328 student affairs and other education-service higher education employees and represented only 0.5 percent (1,202) of 248,976 postsecondary administrators. It is no wonder that among student affairs professionals, the least heard from are Indigenous staff members.

Power Plus Place Equals Personality

Indigenous student development begins with a principle that has long supported the growth and social participation of Indigenous peoples: power plus place equals personality or the 3P principle.

In *Power and Place*, Deloria describes *power* as the living energy that inhabits and composes the universe, perhaps better defined as a spiritual power. *Place* is understood as the relationship of things to each other. *Personality* is the result of the relationship between power and place. Personality emerges from experience and how Indigenous peoples think about their identity in the constellation of relations that constitute their homelands—their places. Understanding this principle historically and currently within Indigenous students’ lives should be a top priority for all student affairs professionals.

Personality reminds us that while the only constant in a living universe is change, human situations—and indeed any situations—in an experiential sense are always the embodiment of the unique character of power and place. Personality not only operates at the level of the individual but more broadly at a cultural level, addressing what persons share collectively in their cultural identities.

The emphasis on particular personalities and unique cultures emerging from power and place, as Deloria repeatedly contended, produces a more experiential view of knowledge held by those paying attention to their *place*—their situation in the world. Knowledge, or wisdom, to borrow the terminology of Keith Basso, a cultural and linguistic anthropologist, does indeed sit in places.

To lessen the invisibility, isolation, and disconnection Indigenous students experience in postsecondary institutions, student affairs professionals at all levels should seek to align their practices with the wisdom embodied in the 3P principle. Seeding the 3P principle requires forging relationships, an intentional practice that involves personal and communal exchanges. Knowledge or knowing is always personal and, at the most fundamental level, always about relationships. One way to develop this connection is by accepting place and peoples as relatives and not as resources. While *Power and Place* author Wildcat makes an important case for how the 3P principle can evolve the sensibilities of Indigenous professionals, student affairs educators can also share in its promotion. “Indigenous professionals who live in the world with relatives and focus on relations would be very different than professionals who study resources (objects) and focus on control,” writes Wildcat in the book. “This would be progress, not as it is typically thought of today, but as a sign that a return to questions about living, as opposed to struggling for existence, is still possible and more crucially necessary.”

3P Principle in Practice

Land Acknowledgments

While non-Native colleges and universities (NNCUs)—a term used in *Beyond the Asterisk: Understanding Native Students in Higher Education* (Stylus, 2013) to center the experiences of Native people in postsecondary settings—increasingly seek to develop land acknowledgments, most neglect to cultivate a place-conscious praxis. A place-conscious praxis is an ongoing process of reflection, dialogue, and transformative action that challenges and evolves individuals' self-comprehension in connection with where they live, learn, and work. In today's context, land acknowledgments are opportunities for NNCUs to explore, deepen, and decolonize the relationship between Indigenous peoples and place such as lands, skies, waters, air, and the more-than-human relatives that dwell

within these habitats. Fundamentally, land acknowledgments address two critical questions: Do you know where you are? Do you know who you are in relationship to where you are?

Indigenous higher education communities often shape their responses according to cultural values, beliefs, and practices defined by their experiential links to geographical contexts. A small set of questions characterize these linguistic, cultural, historical, and political ties to place:

- ▶ Where is your umbilical cord buried?
- ▶ What are your clans?
- ▶ With what tribe(s) and communities do you identify?
- ▶ Who are your relatives?

Reflected in the answers—which can be orated, sung, danced, or expressed through a host of other practices—is the genealogy of the relationship between place and the people indigenous to its context. This connection, because it is living, is

INCORPORATING PLACE INTO STUDENT AFFAIRS

The following considerations for the *in loco terra locus* principle can serve as new ground upon which vice presidents for student affairs can build their student affairs practices:

1 Revisit how an institution promotes the professional identity development of student affairs administrators. Create learning opportunities that explore higher education place-making practices from Indigenous perspectives.

2 Place-consciousness, as a disposition toward serving and supporting Indigenous students, is a dynamic and reconstructive praxis. Remain vigilant in identifying and understanding the dialectical tensions that may negate, marginalize, and harm Indigenous students from becoming full and equal participants on campus.

3 Whether or not Indigenous students perceive themselves as living extensions of place, a major task for student affairs professionals is to recognize that dominant and colonizing definitions of community and belonging consistently seek to supplant Indigenous epistemological underpinnings.

4 *In loco terra locus* encompasses an underlying commitment to understanding the personhood of place. Identical to Indigenous students, place has voice and agency. If student affairs educators are to meet the needs of Indigenous students, they must understand place as relatives, not resources, and extend this manner of engagement to Indigenous students.

why many Indigenous communities persist in mapping their ancestral territories.

In addition to exploring these questions from the vantage point of Indigenous peoples, it is also essential for student affairs practitioners and higher education administrators to summon the courage to mediate their identities from answers to these questions. Since land acknowledgments are a relationally constituted phenomena, many individuals often grapple with formulating personal and institutional responses to these inquiries. An all too common misstep is to plagiarize land acknowledgment verbiage from online sources, a less than sophisticated attempt to becoming a place-conscious student affairs professional. In many instances, land

“The identities of Indigenous peoples are connected with, dependent on, and determined by their umbilical connections with place.”

acknowledgments are short-lived moments at the beginning of conferences and meetings. At best, land acknowledgments should act as a vehicle to communally engage in critical reflection, dialogue, and the production of transformative actions that lead to creating an empowering university context for Indigenous students.

In “Native Americans in Higher Education: A Historical Overview and Implications for the Future” (*NASPA Knowledge Communities Online Publication*, 2019) Stephanie Waterman (Onondaga, Turtle Clan) provides questions to stimulate more substantive insights into place:

- Do you and your staff know whose land your institution occupies?
- Have you made connections with Native communities near and at your institution?
- Have you helped your institution to understand and confront how it has oppressed and marginalized communities?

Above all, learning and practicing critical place-consciousness is entirely dependent on the willingness of campus leaders to move the needle toward a more inclusive campus. By accurately understanding the geographies of today, a more

place-sensitive and place-dependent profession can be developed both in theory and practice.

From in loco parentis to in loco terra locus

Supporting Native students requires a view of how their participation in higher education is distinct from other populations. Writing in *Beyond the Asterisk: Understanding Native Students in Higher Education* (Stylus, 2013), Molly Springer (Cherokee), Charlotte E. Davidson (Diné/Three Affiliated Tribes—Mandan, Hidasta, and Arikara), and Stephanie Waterman discuss this difference in their chapter, “Academic and Student Affairs Partnerships: Native American Student Affairs Units.”

Native American students live on land that was colonized by the very institutions from which they seek an education. Treaties and other policy agreements, laws, and Native American sovereignty are part of our students’ experiences. No other population comes to college with these characteristics.

What continues to go missing in student affairs administration is a serious acceptance and discussion of how colonization remains a part of the lived experiences of Indigenous students. Since time immemorial, place has been foundational to Indigenous peoples and their histories of survival. It is worth repeating that being of a place and being from a place are two very different experiential links. In a post-*in loco parentis* (in lieu of parent) profession, this means understanding the education and development experiences of Indigenous peoples as being historically rooted to an *in loco terra locus* (in lieu of place) principle.

The identities of Indigenous peoples are connected with, dependent on, and determined by their umbilical connections with place. Higher education institutions need to re-examine how they wittingly or unwittingly create structures and conditions that violently estrange Indigenous peoples from who they are and where they are of. **LE**

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NASPA ANNUAL CONFERENCE TO FEATURE SYMPOSIUM ON POWER AND PLACE

Professional preparation often lacks learning that holistically focuses on Indigenous peoples in higher education. In response to this large absence, NASPA's Indigenous Peoples Knowledge Community; NASPA's Orientation, Transition, and Retention Knowledge Community; and NASPA's Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice Division have collaborated to produce the association's first Indigenous-focused symposium. Funded by the NASPA Foundation Collaboration Grant, the Power and Place: Indigenous Worldviews of Higher Education symposium was originally designed as a one-day immersive professional development opportunity at Haskell Indian Nations University, one of 36 tribal colleges and universities (TCU) in the United States. Located in Lawrence, Kansas, Haskell enrolls approximately 800 students each semester, with a student body representing 150 sovereign Native Nations throughout the country. This professional learning opportunity has been reimagined to explore the depths of identities through the education, development, and leadership experiences of Haskell alumni, students, staff, and faculty at the 2021 NASPA Annual Conference.

Power and Place: Indian Education in America (Fulcrum, 2001) will serve as the theoretical orientation for five distinct, 75-minute moderated education sessions:

- **What the Profession Needs to Know About Indigenous Peoples in Higher Education: A Conversation with Daniel Wildcat.** In commemoration of the 20th anniversary of *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*, this session features Haskell Indian Nations University Professor Daniel Wildcat, who, in addition to providing new insights about this seminal text, will discuss how *Power and Place* gives greater salience to and understanding of Indigenous higher education communities.
- **Haskell Alumni: Reflections on Persistence and Degree Attainment.** In this session, three Haskell alumni reflect on factors that shaped their motivations to persist toward degree completion and discuss how their experiences at a TCU influenced their subsequent participation and success at non-Native colleges and universities.
- **Developing Tribal College Students: Haskell Student Affairs Administrators.** This session explores the unique roles, competencies, and challenges of three TCU student affairs professionals in designing and administering orientation, transition, and retention experiences for Haskell students.
- **Next-Gen Haskell Student Success.** This session provides a contemporary portrait of four student leaders at Haskell. They will discuss how their TCU journey has shaped their definitions for sustaining and achieving student success through first-year experiences, mentoring relationships, and purposeful campus engagement.
- **Becoming Indigenous Student Ready: A Primer for Non-Native Colleges and Universities (NNCUs).** This session features contributors to this issue of *Leadership Exchange*. Student affairs and higher education experts will guide presenters through topics and issues that affect Indigenous higher education communities. This opportunity provides practitioners at NNCCUs with further insights and practical strategies to help NNCCU professionals become Indigenous student ready.



Art by Don Montileaux featured at the American Indian Student Center.

Leveraging the Land-Grant Mission to Improve Native Student Access

Wokini Initiative Exemplifies Commitment to Inclusivity

BY BARRY DUNN, SHANA HARMING, ERICA MOORE, AND MARK FREELAND

Founded in 1881, South Dakota State University (SDSU) became the state's first land-grant institution of higher education in 1889 when South Dakota earned statehood. With this designation, SDSU received two land grants to support its work in Brookings, South Dakota. The 1862 Morrill Act granted 120,000 acres devoted to its academic mission, and the Hatch Act of 1887 earmarked an additional 40,000 acres for the South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station (SDAES).



Most of the land is located in the western part of the state and, before being awarded to the university, was promised to the Indigenous peoples of this land, the Oceti Sakowin (oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we) or “Seven Council Fires.” The Native Nations that comprise the Oceti Sakowin are the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota peoples, more commonly known as Sioux. In 1869, the Fort Laramie Treaty designated these lands as part of the Great Sioux Reservation. Without gaining official consent from Tribal leaders, the federal government undermined the aforementioned treaty and claimed much of the land in western South Dakota under the Dawes Act of 1889. The land was made available for a variety of purposes, including homesteading, mining, and railroad development as well as public schools. Ultimately, it also included the land-grant commitment to SDSU. Today, SDSU’s gifted land is managed by the South Dakota government-elected commissioner of school and public lands. As the designated land was sold through the years, the state placed those proceeds in a trust and the annualized return on those investments flows to SDSU and SDAES.

“To close the financial gap for American Indian students, the Wokini Initiative provides scholarships to incoming first-year, transfer, and graduate students.”

The university’s reach has been far and wide throughout South Dakota, yet the nine reservations and federally recognized tribes (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Yankton Sioux Tribe) within the state’s borders have historically been underserved by much of the academic, research, and outreach mission of SDSU. This history of overlooking and underserving Tribal communities has resulted in consistently low American Indian student recruitment, retention, and graduation rates at SDSU.

The Wokini Initiative

From the beginning of his presidency in 2016, SDSU President Barry H. Dunn has been committed to providing the benefits of higher education to American Indians. With that in mind, Dunn outlined five primary university commitments through the Wokini Initiative. Wokini is a Lakota term meaning a “new life” or “new beginning.” Five key components of the Wokini Initiative are:

- 1 | Spend the annual flow of financial resources from university land to benefit the heirs from whom the land was taken.
- 2 | Leverage those resources with private, nongovernment organizations, federal grants, and other resources.
- 3 | Build an American Indian Student Center on campus.
- 4 | Engage and seek advice and counsel from leaders of the tribal colleges and nine tribes in South Dakota.
- 5 | Increase the number of American Indian students enrolled on campus to a level that is reflective of South Dakota’s general American Indian population.

Financial access to education remains a consistent obstacle for many American Indian students who lack funding or encounter barriers to obtaining additional resources to finance their academic journeys. To close the financial gap for American Indian students, the Wokini Initiative provides scholarships to incoming first-year, transfer, and graduate students. Students awarded a Wokini scholarship are referred to as “Wokini Scholars.” In addition to the scholarships, the Wokini Initiative offers emergency funding to address the unmet financial needs of students, including medical bills, rent, tuition, textbooks, gas, food, and other unforeseen financial obstacles.

A Traditional Structure Guides New Initiative

Hired as the Wokini and tribal relations director in 2018, Shana Harming (Kul Wicasa Oyate) has since translated Dunn’s vision into a readily identifiable framework for the American Indian student population the initiative seeks to recruit and retain. The Wokini Initiative is structured in relation to the Oceti Sakowin tipi. Tipi, which translates into “dwelling,” holds immense importance to the collective existence and cultural lives of the Oceti Sakowin. The historical utility

of a tipi was to serve as a durable and portal home for the Tiyospaye (Lakota term for family), and it often had intergenerational occupants. Its fabrication required the active involvement of both men and women: the men harvested pine for use as tipi poles and buffalo hides for the covering; women traditionally erected and dismantled tipis.

To implement a tipi framework, it is important to understand the epistemology of tipi building. To begin, three of the heaviest poles are positioned first to anchor the structure, respectively representing the past, present, and future. Seven poles are then placed around the three anchor poles in a clockwise direction. The seven poles are a depiction of the seven council fires of the



COURTESY OF HEATHER J. SHOTTON (WICHITA AND AFFILIATED TRIBES)

The tipi serves as the framework for the Wokini Initiative.

Oceti Sakowin: Mdewakanton (Dwellers by the Sacred Lake), Wahpekute (Shooters Among the Leaves), Sisonwan/Sisseton (People of the Marsh), Wahpetonwan (Dwellers Among the Leaves), Ihanktown/Lower Yanktonai (People of the End), Ihanktowana/Upper Yanktoni (People of the Little End), and Tetonwan (People on the Plains). The seven poles are also associated with the seven Lakota values (courage, fortitude, generosity, honor, humility, respect, and wisdom) and the seven stars that comprise the Big Dipper. The floor space is considered Unci Maka (Lakota word for Grandmother Earth), which expresses the active land-based relationship between human beings and Grandmother Earth and the circularity of life. The walls of the tipi reach up and connect to the sky, and the point where the poles are tied together connects tipi occupants to the spirit world.

Considerations for VPSAs

BY SHANA HARMING AND ERICA MOORE

The participation of Native students in higher education has implications for how vice presidents for student affairs (VPSAs) perceive their roles and the reporting relationships they have with professionals who support this student population. These considerations are offered as a starting point to enhance understanding:

- Indigenous worldviews do not limit an understanding of student affairs or the experience of higher education. They are inherently global and consider all of humanity and the interconnected relationships with the earth and all her inhabitants. Narrow understandings of Indigenous worldviews by well-meaning colleagues can result in either, or both, objectification or appropriation of Indigenous knowledge, practices, and protocols. As the primary advocate for students, VPSAs are encouraged to engage with the Indigenous higher education community on their campuses. It is important they educate themselves about the lived experiences of Native students and collaborate with them, as well as Native professionals, to create transformative change on campus.
- While Native student affairs educators have a professional responsibility to understand student development theories, they also have a personal commitment to deepening their understanding of their own growth. It is increasingly important to explore ways to translate Indigenous worldviews into student affairs practices. This is also a growing development need among Native student affairs professionals. VPSAs have the responsibility to support professional development opportunities that nurture this type of growth. In addition, they should encourage other senior leaders, faculty, and staff to promote, and participate in, such professional development opportunities.



SDSU President Barry Dunn, back far left, celebrates with students at the American Indian Student Center Graduation Honoring Ceremony.

Three Anchor Poles

Three anchor programs serve as the base relational structure upon which the rest of the tipi is built. Together, they support the recruitment and retention of American Indian students to graduation by building a network of institutional structures to support them. Meaningful partnerships, as well as academic, social, and cultural programming, strengthen their relationship with each other, the broader institution, and Tribal communities.

Office of Wokini. The Wokini Initiative is led by a Kul Wicasa Oyate (Lower Brule Sioux Tribe) Wipyan (woman) of the Oceti Sakowin. Guided by her lived history, the tipi carries deep personal meaning regarding the place-making capacity of Wipyan. Tipi building embodies the principles of love and kinship that encourage cooperation among a network of relations. The absence of these energies will compromise the strength of this structure. Enacting respectful practices that embody tipi building is essential to the Office of Wokini and all collaborators in keeping this framework effective and robust.

The director of the initiative serves various roles and duties on campus, including educator, fundraiser, manager, and leader. While it is challenging to delineate these functions, the office's responsibility in facilitating ongoing dialogues between South Dakota Tribes, members of SDSU, and other key stakeholders to best serve Tribal constituents, the institution, state, and region cannot be underestimated.

The initiative has raised \$14.1 million in private funding and received \$2 million in grants. While still in its infancy, the Wokini Initiative has taken the first dramatic steps to create the institutional change necessary to truly accomplish its

fundamental mission—to provide the benefits of higher education to all South Dakota citizens.

American Indian Student Center (AISC). The newly constructed AISC is a stand-alone facility to visibly acknowledge the institution's commitment to the American Indian higher education community at SDSU. Once relegated to the margins of campus, it now stands near the center of campus. AISC staff members facilitate opportunities for academic and social support and provide cultural programming for American Indian undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. Cultural programs include a Lakota language talking circle, beading and sewing circles, and a men's drum group—all promote holistic learning and community building while reducing feelings of alienation.

The AISC also serves as an entry point for students to explore aspects of their heritage. The Sunka Wakan (Shun-ka Wah-kah, Lakota term for Sacred Dog or horse) program is a co-curricular partnership between the AISC and the university's equine science program. The purpose of the program is to enrich the first-year experience of American Indian students by introducing them to the historical and contemporary role of horses in the survival and function of the Oceti Sakowin. Sunka Wakan not only provides involvement outside the classroom but fosters adjustment to campus life by centering the identity of American Indian students.

American Indian Studies (AIS). AIS provides initial support for Wokini Scholars through direct involvement in the classroom, supplying cultural expertise for educational training in the university and supporting research and outreach with Indigenous communities. During the



planning of the Wokini Initiative, AIS faculty and staff worked together to develop a freshman and sophomore academic requirement to strengthen the Wokini Scholar cohort and increase American Indian students' sense of campus community and connection to their culture. In the fall of freshman year, Wokini Scholars are required to take an Introduction to American Indian Studies course. This course creates meaningful opportunities for students to explore and express their American Indian identities, as it centers their communities and cultural knowledge, providing a foundation for academic success.

AIS faculty, along with a curriculum specialist, and colleagues from the Center for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and institutional assessment have an ongoing collaboration with the Wokini office to design and deliver professional development programs. These learning opportunities help SDSU staff and campus professionals cultivate culturally responsive approaches to creating an inclusive educational environment, one in which American Indian students feel visible, heard, and respected. These institutionalized training efforts have not only resulted in an understanding of the educational realities of American Indian students but also have engendered a communal responsibility among administrators, advisors, counselors, and faculty to support their belonging on campus.

Seven Support Poles

The seven additional support poles represent key stakeholders within the holistic and collaborative framework of the Wokini Initiative. These stakeholders include American Indian students and families; academic affairs; student affairs; fundraising and student scholarships; research and

scholarship; tribal colleges and universities; and Tribal outreach and partnerships.

Interior Body

American Indian students are as strong and resilient as the tipi structure designed to support them. The interior of the tipi provides a safe and sacred space where all who enter are welcomed. The education and development of the Oceti Sakowin, in part, comes from dwelling within a tipi. The Wokini Initiative, thus, seeks to maintain that continuity by creating conditions that foster a self-determined existence. This conscious effort is fundamental to contemporary American Indian student development.

Wokini Scholars. American Indian students attending SDSU represent different tribes nationwide, but the majority are in-state residents. To be considered for a Wokini Scholarship, incoming students must be accepted to SDSU, and complete the appropriate Wokini Scholarship online application form. The eligibility criteria for Wokini Scholarships are enrollment in a South Dakota tribe; residency in South Dakota; and full-time student status. Scholarships for freshman students are \$5,000 per year for up to five years. Scholarships for transfer and graduate students are \$5,000 per year for up to three years. Since research demonstrates American Indian students frequently leave higher education for financial or personal reasons but return to continue their higher education journeys, Wokini Scholars are allowed to “stop out” for up to two semesters and continue their eligibility for the scholarship when they return to SDSU.

To date, SDSU has awarded Wokini Scholarships to 53 first-time freshman and four transfer or advanced degree American Indian

SDSU President Barry Dunn speaks at the 2018 groundbreaking ceremony for the American Indian Student Center.



The newly constructed American Indian Student Center is at the center of SDSU student life.

students. Twelve Wokini Scholars from the 2018 cohort returned to SDSU in fall 2019, reflecting an 80 percent retention rate. The second cohort of 19 Wokini scholarships was awarded in fall 2019, and 17 students persisted to spring 2019, reflecting an 89 percent persistence rate for the second Wokini Scholars cohort. Twenty Wokini scholarships were awarded to incoming freshmen in 2020.

“...SDSU is well positioned to provide professional development training that will allow faculty and staff to gain a broader understanding of American Indian history, culture, and current issues.”

The toll of the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted student persistence, which has resulted in 10 of the 2019 Wokini Scholars choosing to remain in their communities for this academic year, but all are committed to SDSU for the next academic year. The 10 Wokini Scholars who return in fall 2022 will receive their full Wokini scholarship award.

The Next Commitment: Transforming SDSU's Campus Culture

The lack of ethnic diversity in SDSU faculty and staff is challenging. Additionally, even the best-intentioned and well-meaning individuals can unintentionally cause difficulty for under-represented students because they lack cultural awareness and historical understanding.

SDSU is deepening its pledge to American Indian students. The university is committed to changing the culture on campus for all employees through professional development. The intended result is to foster a culturally responsive and supportive campus environment for American Indian students. Through the award of a Margaret A. Cargill grant, SDSU is well positioned to provide professional development training that will allow faculty and staff to gain a broader understanding of American Indian history, culture, and current issues. This commitment will result in a better understanding of American Indian students by faculty and staff and will foster respect and more positive relationships, which will manifest in student success. **LE**

Barry Dunn (Rosebud Sioux Tribe) is the president of South Dakota State University.

Shana Harming (Kul Wicasa Oyate) is the Wokini and tribal relations director at South Dakota State University.

Erica Moore (United Confederation of Taino People) is the director of the American Indian Student Center at South Dakota State University.

Mark Freeland (Bahweting Anishinaabe Nation) is the American Indian Studies program coordinator and an assistant professor at South Dakota State University.

*Sustaining Native Students in an **Era of COVID-19***

*Return-to-Campus Plans Must Honor
Cultural Differences*

BY BYRON TSABETSAYE

Diné (The People), also known as Navajo, regard themselves as Náhokah Diné (Earth Surface People) and Bilá ‘ashdla’ (Five-Fingered Ones). As recorded in their creation narratives, they emerged from a series of three underworlds into this current world between Four Sacred Mountains, a land known as Dinétah, meaning “among the people.” In today’s context, this land base is known as the Navajo Nation, the largest federally recognized Native American tribe in the United States. The Navajo Nation extends 27,000 square miles across three states from northwest New Mexico to northeast Arizona and southeast Utah, approximately the size of West Virginia.



Today, the Navajo Nation struggles with challenges similar to many other Native people living on reservations. Nearly half of Diné people live without access to clean running water and electricity in their homes. Many Diné families reside in rural areas without easy access to the internet, food, and other essential resources. Food insecurity is furthered by the fact that there are only 13 full-service grocery stores on the reservation. These conditions are compounded by decades of exposure to uranium mines that have contaminated multiple homes and water sources and have impacted the health of Diné people.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit the Navajo Nation disproportionately, creating one of the most widely known coronavirus hot spots in the world. At the time of this writing, Diné Tribal leaders continue to enforce a strict curfew and issue weekly 57-hour, shelter-in-place orders to slow the virus. Not being able to leave your home

from Friday evenings to Monday mornings has created a narrow window for Diné people to maintain a livelihood and purchase groceries and other supplies. Diné students returned home to these environmental conditions, which affect the reality Native-serving institutions face during the pandemic.

Native-Serving Institutional Types

Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) and Native American-serving nontribal institutions (NASNTIs) are two types of Native-serving institutions. They are often located on or near Native American communities or within border towns next to Native American reservations. Native-serving institutions are designed to create pathways to higher education by serving Native people, respective of culture, tradition, and environment.

A social distancing decal at San Juan College's Native American Center.



Diné College students celebrate their graduation.

Diné College

In 1968, Diné College, formerly Navajo Community College, became the first tribally controlled and accredited collegiate institution in the United States. There are 37 TCUs in the United States. Most maintain at least a 95 percent Native American student enrollment. These institutions are often run by a tribe or Tribal government within which they are based. Many TCUs exist within their own homelands across the country with a diverse representation of cultures. Tribal leaders worked with the federal government to create institutions of higher learning for their people by designing programs to reflect the core values and principles of culture and Indigenous ways of knowing and learning.

At present, Diné College operates several campuses throughout the Navajo Nation, with the main campus located near the center of the reservation in Tsaile, Arizona. The Diné know this location as Tshéíł—“the place where the stream flows in the canyon.” In addition to its main campus, Diné College operates three sites in Arizona and two sites in New Mexico. A branch campus in Shiprock, New Mexico, is one of the Navajo Nation’s largest communities. The main campus provides a residence life program with nine residence halls, accommodating 251 students per semester, including family student housing. Enrollment at the college has ranged from a modest 300 students since its founding

to a progressive 1,400 students in recent years. Diné College enrollment is more than 90 percent American Indian/Alaska Native students with a majority representation of Diné students. On average, the college registers less than five percent of Non-American Indian/Alaska Native students, representing other Tribal nations and Non-Native students.

San Juan College

Located in the northern region of the Navajo Nation, San Juan College is one of 24 institutions in the country with a NASNTI designation. NASNTIs have 10 percent or higher Native American student enrollment; San Juan College has more than a 30 percent Native American student enrollment rate and serves a significant amount of Diné students. Given its NASNTI status, it operates as a nontribal institution, also serving Latinx/a/o and non-Native student populations. NASNTIs are often public institutions and, like San Juan College, are two-year community colleges. The college began as a branch of New Mexico State University, serving only 25 students in Northwest New Mexico. Today, it serves more than 10,000 students annually and has five campuses, all within proximity to the Navajo Nation.

San Juan College has institutionalized many services and resources to serve Native American and Indigenous student populations. The college’s

Native American Center (NAC) is one of two cultural student centers on campus. It exists as a familial space on campus for Indigenous students to feel a sense of place and belonging. The NAC embodies the atmosphere of home using Indigenous symbology, such as woven Navajo rugs and sand paintings. An essential function of the center is to maintain strong relationships with Tribal education offices and organizations that exist to promote Native student success.

SNBH: A Traditional Approach to Support

Diné College takes a unique approach to fulfill the mission of the institution by applying the Diné educational philosophy of Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón (SNBH). Dean C. Jackson, the college's president in 1979, explained SNBH in the following way: "Sa" means maturity, and "ah" is either unchanging or eternal. "Naaghái" is going about. "Bik'eh" is the way or pathway. Finally, "Hozhoon" is usually defined as harmony or beauty restored. Thus Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hozhoon reflects the living, natural order of things, including the interaction between the earth and other celestial bodies. By knowing how nature behaves, Navajos act in accordance with nature. Diné College describes SNBH as a traditional living system, supported by the following principles:

- ▶ **Nitsáhákees.** Thinking. Baa nitsidzikees. Apply the techniques of reasoning. Analyze alternative solutions through the use of the principles of logic and creativity.
- ▶ **Nahat'á.** Planning. Nahat'á anitsikees bee yáti' dóó íishjání óolzin. Develop and demonstrate communication skills. Nahat'á nahaaldeel. Demonstrate systematic organization skills.
- ▶ **liná.** Implementation. T'áá hó ájít' éego hozhoogo oodáál. Demonstrate self-direction based on personal values consistent with the moral standards of society. T'áá hó ájít' éego hózhóogo oodáál. Demonstrate quality, participation, work, and materials.
- ▶ **Siihasin.** Reflection and assurance. Siihasingo oodáál. Demonstrate competency. Siihasin nahaaldeel. Demonstrate confidence.

SNBH provides a good starting place for all Diné people and those who work in higher education contexts that serve Diné students to navigate the pandemic.

Implementing SNBH as a Student Affairs Practice

The following examples show how one Indigenous worldview signals new, yet ancient, ways of perceiving and enacting SNBH practices in the student affairs profession.

Thinking (Nitsáhákees). Before planning, thinking must occur. SNBH provides the strength to confidently commit to developing a process and outcome of Hózhó (beauty, balance, and harmony) and K'é (kinship). Beyond family and relatives, K'é represents a larger commitment to take care of one another, to care for all people. K'é encourages outward positive behavior and attitudes toward all peoples. Essential to both of these concepts is not recreating harm. In other words, to achieve Hózhó and K'é, every step is consciously mapped and carried out in a way that enlivens the Diné thought process.

Planning (Nahat'á). Enrollment was a principal factor in determining how to plan for the fall 2020 semester at Diné College. While many institutions faced enrollment decreases, Diné College experienced greater than expected enrollment rates in light of the pandemic. Administrators attributed the fall 2020 enrollment of 1,348 students to several factors, including reduced tuition rates, targeted marketing campaigns, and an increased number of transfer students who returned home.

In formulating return-to-campus plans, San Juan College followed institutional and state

Miss Eastern Navajo Teen 2019–2020, Cajun Cleveland, displays the Native American Center's Navajo calendar at the Navajo Nation Fair.





The Navajo Hoghaan is the traditional dwelling of the Navajo people, which is synonymous with land and mothers, a source of sustenance, support, and nurturing.

guidelines. In doing so, the Native American Center committed to indigenizing the implementation of these guidelines to meet Native student needs. When procedures and policies become indigenized, institutions experience greater Indigenous student success.

Implementation (liná). Indigenous practices and languages have a rightful place within TCUs and NASNTIs. In tandem with this understanding, the pandemic signaled that new traditions must be created, such as at-a-distance kinship practices. While the pandemic functions to alienate students through less human contact and social interaction, the Diné language provides a way for Native-serving institutions to stay connected with students.

With the majority of students navigating online spaces, Diné College implemented several strategies to stay engaged with students virtually. A message titled “Yéego Warriors!” was communicated to the student community through social media, encouraging a positive mindset through fall 2020 midterms. “Yéego,” a word used to emphasize diligence and strength, coupled with the college’s mascot term “Warriors,” sent a message of assurance and empowerment.

Most notable in this messaging was “Nihidinoot’ahii” meaning “don’t lose the sheep.” This metaphor uses sheep herding, a Diné tradition, as a comparison to staying on track and minimizing distractions. For the Diné, animal relatives are an extension of K’é. Dibé (sheep) are understood as animal relatives who, in return for their care, contribute to the wholeness and wellness of the Diné. Young Diné people are

taught to care for the sheep by watching over them as they graze the land to eat from early morning to sundown. The sheep are protected from harm and are kept from straying or wandering from the herd into danger. The ma’ii (coyote) is known to be a trickster in Diné teachings; if the sheep are not cared for and protected, they can encounter danger or become distracted. Trickster represents the distraction that students may encounter as they journey through learning. This messaging campaign reminded students to prioritize self-care and wellness as driving factors for student success.

Another form of Indigenous practice in higher education, specific to the COVID-19 pandemic, was the indigenization of personal protective equipment (PPE). Diné College created mask kits for its student community containing branded masks, hand sanitizer, and a pouch to carry the PPE. Additionally, the college attached this practice to the nationally observed “Rock Your Mocs” day when Native people collectively wear their moccasins. Creating the hashtags #DCRockYourMocs and #DinéBikelchi (Navajo moccasins), the college encouraged its student community to post pictures on “Rock Your Mocs” day using the hashtags, in exchange for PPE kits.

During the pandemic, Diné College has upheld a commitment to supporting research opportunities and professional development for their students. Typically, in the fall, several science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) students would travel off the reservation to participate in national conferences. Given the virtual landscape of conferencing during the pandemic, the college used virtual spaces

and technology to participate. Perhaps the most profound aspect of these experiences is the student research regarding COVID-19, which helped inform and promote safe communities at Diné College and on the Navajo Nation.

At the suggestion of Native students, the Native American Center at San Juan College used local Native languages to lessen the disconnection between them and campus administrators. For example, traditional phrases were affixed to plexiglass desk shields to welcome and greet students. One plexiglass read, Mique Tugüvun! (Ute phrase for Hello, Friend!), while another stated, Yá'átééh! (Diné term for Hello! or All is good!). Buttons were also created so that frontline student affairs workers could express themselves properly to students. These gestures are enormously significant to the development of students and should not be considered solely as cognitive acts of recognition. Greetings, in Native languages, assume a posture of relationship building and are critical for advancing a sense of belonging for Native students.

Another avenue for facilitating at-a-distance kinship practices is an academic calendar based on the Diné calendar system. On a 12-month calendar, the Diné new year occurs during Ghááji' (End of Growing Season) or late September, early October. Ghááji' marks the end of harvesting crops, a time to prepare for colder months, and the arrival of a new moon. By re-orienting the academic calendar to align with changing weather, agricultural practices, and the birthing cycle of certain animals, senior administrators and faculty garnered a sense of Diné ways of knowing and prioritized cultural ways of planning for students. As such, the Diné calendar system represents one attempt to understand the relationships that influence and shape Diné students outside the classroom.

The Native American Center at San Juan College also produced new areas of meaning and representation through the display of Navajo rugs. While artistic and aesthetically pleasing to the college wall spaces, collectively, the woven rugs bring the identity of Diné students into plain sight. The wide diversity of vibrant colors and geometric designs mirror the hues and geographical features of Diné'tah. Less discernible are the cultural stories—too many to mention here—exquisitely expressed in the patterns. Navajo rugs also hang in the homes of many students. From the moment they enter the classroom, Diné students transform academic spaces because they bring diverse designs of thinking to the process of learning. Like Navajo rugs, their beautiful presence reminds everyone that Dine students are part of the institution.

Reflection (Sihasin). Kari Deswood (Diné), associate professor at San Juan College, recently

shared that the pandemic should prompt professional staff and faculty to be conscious of Hoghaan haz'aagi bohoo' ahh (learning and development are mediated by and through the home). The Hoghaan is a traditional eight-sided, one-room dwelling. Made of wood and dirt, the roof of the Hoghaan is dome-shaped, signifying the belly produced by pregnancy. The doorway of the Hoghaan always faces east, the direction of the sunrise, and where thinking begins. Similar to SNBH, there is no universal application of Hoghaan haz'aagi bohoo' ahh. However its foundation, akin to SNBH, includes the philosophical principles of Hózhó and K'é.

Hoghaan haz'aagi bohoo' ahh provides a crucial contextual basis for re-imagining student affairs in a post-COVID world. The concept of the Hoghaan bears little resemblance to conventional practitioner notions of creating a “home away from home” for students in that the Hoghaan is synonymous with land and mothers. In a Diné sense, land and mothers provide sustenance,

“...the new educational normal need not disfigure the education and development of Native students.”

consistent support, as well as nurturing and harmonious educational environments. In essence, they promote the values of Hózhó and K'é. Constructing belonging and community, as part of return-to-campus plans for Native students, must include relational models that honor their cultural differences and their distinct lived engagements with home-places like Diné'tah and the Hoghaan. What Native students require in these difficult times are student affairs professionals, faculty members, and university administrators who are more reflective and aware of how Indigenous worldviews attend, holistically, to students, despite virtualized conditions. As evidenced by the work of San Juan College and Diné College, the new educational normal need not disfigure the education and development of Native students. Instead, it can strengthen it. **LE**

Byron Tsabetsaye (Diné and A:Shiwi) is the director of the Native American Center at San Juan College.

Insights and Lessons from Campus Tribal Liaisons



Tribal flag plaza at the University of Arizona



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The tribal liaison plays a critical role in enhancing relationships between non-Native colleges and universities (NNCU) and Tribal Nations and communities. In the last decade, the number of tribal liaisons has increased at NNCU across the United States. Yet, little is known about the roles and responsibilities of tribal liaisons and the importance of their work in fostering good relations and leading Native American initiatives on their campuses.

In this roundtable, four tribal liaisons share the evolution of their positions, their support for Native students and faculty, institutional accountability for Native student success, key

aspects of their roles, and managing tensions between Native Nations and institutions. They also share suggestions for incorporating Tribal sovereignty into student affairs work.

Interviewees include:

Pam Agoyo (Cochiti, Kewa, and Ohkay Owingeh Pueblos), director of American Indian Student Services and special assistant to the president for American Indian Affairs, University of New Mexico

Aaron Bird Bear (Diné/Three Affiliated Tribes), director of tribal relations, Office of University Relations and Division of Extension, University of Wisconsin–Madison

Yolanda Bisbee (Nimiipuu [Nez Perce]), executive director of tribal relations and chief diversity officer, University of Idaho

Jason Younker (Coquille Indian Tribe of Oregon), assistant vice president and advisor to the president on sovereignty and government relations, University of Oregon

What catalyzed your institution to create a tribal liaison role?

PAM AGOYO (PA): The special assistant to the president for American Indian Affairs position was established at the University of New Mexico (UNM) in August 2005, as a result of a strong recommendation from Sandra Begay, a board of regents member who was nearing the end of her term, to ensure that the institution's focus on the nurturing and stewardship of opportunities for Indigenous peoples and Tribal communities continued to advance. I was the initial presidential appointee and have maintained the position since that time.

AARON BIRD BEAR (ABB): In 2015, the University of Wisconsin (UW)—Madison hosted the elected leadership of the 12 Native Nations of Wisconsin for the first time in the university's history at the Native Nations-UW Summit on the Environment and Health. After the summit, the new Native Nations-UW Working Group created the 2017–2019 Native Nations-UW Strategic Plan with seven areas: relationship building, education pathways, Native campus climate, research relationships, environment and natural resources, language and culture, and health. Included in this strategic plan was a recommendation for a tribal relations director to facilitate communication and collaboration between Native Nations and the university. In 2019, UW-Madison created the position with dual appointments in the Office of University Relations and the Division of Extension.

YOLANDA BISBEE (YB): The tribal liaison was established in August 2007 as a result of Tribal representatives, American Indian Studies (AIS) faculty, and Indigenous staff advocacy. There was not a defined framework to work with tribes, and there was a need to have Tribal voices on campus to address curriculum and student recruitment and retention. This was the beginning of Nation Building at the university. Previously, much of the engagement came from faculty and Indigenous staff who were running Native student space without compensation or support.

JASON YOUNKER (JY): In 2005, the University of Oregon hired a Native American specialist in the Department of Equity and Inclusion. This was not a good fit. In 2013, this Native person was unceremoniously fired by the diversity chief. All Oregon tribes were upset. In 2014, I was hired and placed under the president as a direct report. This was a better fit; Tribal government relations are not diversity initiatives. Tribes are

sovereign domestic nations and deservedly should have direct access to the president; likewise, the university president should have direct access to the Tribal Chair.

How does the tribal liaison role on your campus benefit Indigenous students and/or faculty?

PA: The most significant benefit of my role to Indigenous students, staff, and faculty is that UNM Native community experiences remain centered in the president's awareness and consciousness. Whether the president or other university administration leaders actually take action or have positive impact on outcomes, they are always aware that the UNM Native community must be considered in every aspect of campus: enrollment, student services, scholarships and financial aid, retention and graduation, research opportunities (for both students and faculty), faculty mentoring, academic scholarship, curriculum development, fundraising and development, and so much more. My role also affords me the privilege of highlighting the important and impressive work and action of faculty, students, and staff that may not otherwise gain the president's attention and also recommend and nominate individuals to serve on critical university committees, task forces, and community engagement initiatives.

ABB: For students, the tribal relations director, who has more than 20 years of experience on campus, partnered with university admissions to connect with new and continuing Indigenous students to share relevant resources, including the network of supportive Indigenous faculty and staff on campus. The tribal relations director helped Indigenous staff navigate the campus administration to create the fall 2020 First-Year Interest Group Listening to Land and co-led a staff effort to secure a \$500,000 U.S. Department of Agriculture New Beginnings for Tribal Students grant to support education pathways for Indigenous students. For faculty, the tribal relations director often supports instruction, conferences, and presentations related to Indigenous nations.

YB: As the executive director of tribal relations, I work in all campus areas to influence research, curriculum, enrollment management, and administration. I work to provide a resource not only to the Indigenous students and faculty, but to all campus constituents to build an inclusive campus on traditional Nimiipuu homelands through awareness and education. By creating





greater understanding of our Tribal communities on campus, we build a more welcoming environment for our Indigenous students. I organize the president’s annual trips to visit with the tribes, and I also facilitate the president’s Native American Advisory Council meetings and take the lead on projects and tasks assigned by the council. I also have direct oversight of the Native American Student Center, which helps connect administrative actions and policy implementation that may impact student recruitment and retention.

JY: Most importantly, the position is a symbol of respect for sovereignty. I am responsible for making sure cultural protocols are followed, serve as the first point of contact for Tribal governments, act as an agent of recruitment and an advocate for program funding and development, manage the Many Nations Longhouse, and work at the highest levels on campus and with Tribal governments. Faculty and staff are within the provost’s portfolio, and I work closely with his office. I assist all vice presidents on campus when American Indian/

“Cultural competency is important when navigating tensions and demonstrating cultural protocols...”



Alaska Native issues are addressed.

Regionally, how many tribes do you work with, and how do these tribes keep your institution accountable for Indigenous student success?

PA: Meaningful consultation with the 24 sovereign Nations (20 Pueblos, the Navajo Nation, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, the Mescalero Apache Tribe, and the Fort Sill Apache Tribe) that comprise the tribes in New Mexico has been key to maintaining communication, connection, and collaboration with Tribal leadership and Tribal higher education departments. Since beginning my role, I have been adamant in my perspective that, at a minimum, annual leadership-to-leadership (university president to Tribal leaders) convenings are critical to maintaining relationships. A key

aspect includes gaining insight and perspective from Tribal leaders about how the institution can make UNM an even better destination for Native students and emphasizing workforce development and economic growth to provide graduates with opportunities to contribute to their respective communities, economies, and cultures.

ABB: Today, there are 11 federally recognized Native Nations and one unrecognized in Wisconsin, and the tribal relations director at UW-Madison works with each of the 12 Tribal governments. To date, UW-Madison has hosted summits in 2015 and 2019 with the elected officials of the 12 Native Nations, at which Tribal leadership met with senior university administrators to discuss matters of mutual concern, including Native American student success. Tribal nations also shared their interests, concerns, and priorities in listening sessions with university staff in 2016, 2017, and 2019. Lastly, the Native Nations-UW Tribal Advisory Council meets monthly (virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic), and Tribal representatives continue to discuss the needs of their Tribal citizens enrolled at the university.

YB: A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was established in 2007, and 10 tribes were identified as the first signatory tribes. There are now 11 signatory tribes. As outlined in the MOU, the president of the university established an advisory council comprised of the Tribal chairs from these 11 signatory tribes to meet twice a year to advise the president on issues regarding student recruitment and retention, Tribal collaborations, and research. Also outlined in the MOU is the establishment of an advisory board, comprised of the signatory tribes’ education directors, who meet twice a year with the university’s Native American Student Center and university student affairs representatives to specifically address Native student recruitment and retention. Through these meetings, university leadership builds critical relationships with the Tribal leadership, which then guides collaborations for the entire university. Tribal research guidance has also been established in collaboration with the research office and Institutional Research Board. This has been a great way to engage with anyone wishing to work in full collaboration with tribes to provide critical guidance that respects cultural protocols and resources.

JY: My primary constituency is the nine federally recognized tribes of Oregon. We also have a Residency by Aboriginal Rights program that includes 33 additional tribes that have been removed from Oregon or had access to Oregon

before colonialism (i.e., Modoc of Oklahoma are originally from southern Oregon). In addition, we establish government relations with any of the country's 574 tribes. Most recently, several tribes in Arizona and California have reached out. In these cases, when establishing relations, I personally visit reservations to better understand their educational needs.

What strategies have you found to be most successful for navigating tensions between Native Nations and your institution?

PA: In my experience, active listening is probably the most essential element of successfully navigating tensions. Having the historical knowledge of the evolution of university-tribal relations over the course of nearly three decades is extremely useful and has served me well. I also recognize that I serve at the pleasure of the president and take that notion to heart by incorporating many aspects of servant leadership into my strategic guidance and assistance. To be clear, servant leadership is not a new or Western concept to me. Growing up in Ohkay Owingeh—Place of the Strong People—with a traditional Pueblo upbringing grounded in cultural knowledge and the core values of my ancestors, servant leadership has essentially been my way of life. Cultural competency is important when navigating tensions and demonstrating cultural protocols, such as traditional introductions, opening and closing meeting prayers, and land acknowledgment, and often tempers tension and creates space for understanding and collaboration.

ABB: To address tensions between Tribal nations and the university, the tribal relations director promotes a higher education framework of relationships, revitalization, and reconciliation through which to work to raise awareness of Tribal governance and culture on campus and campus revitalization efforts with Tribal nations. The director also works on reconciliation efforts between the university and Tribal nations such as the Our Shared Future initiative. As a Research I university, UW-Madison focuses on research, and research remains an issue for Native Nations due to past experiences with researchers from many universities, including UW-Madison. To this end, UW-Madison is working to co-develop a research center with Indigenous nations that will focus on collaborations with them.

YB: The key strategy is to build a strong relationship of trust and respect between the institution and the tribes. At the University of Idaho, there is an institutional recognition of the sovereignty status of tribes, and protocols are in

place in regard to research and programming that promote full Tribal consultation and engagement flowing through the Office of Tribal Relations. Our MOU has been a very useful mechanism to achieve these two goals. Maintaining consistent communication and collaboration promotes relationship building with tribes to easily address any difficult situation that may arise.

JY: Lots of communication is critical. We established the Native American Advisory Council (NAAC) that meets twice a year; once on campus in the fall and then at a reservation in the spring. The NAAC is the president's advisory board, and he is willing to visit reservations in person. This gesture has afforded the university a lot of forgiveness. Part of my job is to keep the university from making the same mistakes. I am the institutional knowledge bearer for the University of Oregon regarding American Indian and Alaska Native agreements and collaborations.

What key function should campus administrators know regarding your role as a tribal liaison?

PA: In the same ways that campus administrators prefer to be engaged and respected, they should know that my role is to support them in engaging Tribal leaders at the same or greater levels at which heads of state (leaders of sovereign nations) want to be engaged. Campus administrators should also know that it is to their benefit to utilize a tribal liaison, like myself, to bridge connection and communication with tribes. It demonstrates their respect for the role as well as embodies a spirit of collaboration they typically would like to see reciprocated from tribes.

ABB: The Four Rs are often promoted in the western Great Lakes for working with Native Nations and communities: respect, relationships, reciprocity, and responsibility. Long-term relationships that hold collective memory are vital for solidifying mutually beneficial relationships with Native Nations. One Tribal leader shared with university leaders last year that the university is "re-starting" its relationship with its Tribal nation. In addition to the tribal relations director, Tribal nations shared their hope for increased presence of university community leaders in their Tribal communities and hope for more faculty and staff to connect with communities on visits beyond just a single meeting.

YB: As the tribal liaison, I work to make sure the university community is aware of the government-to-government relationship that the institution has





with the tribes. As an entity and land grant of the state, this is an important point to understand, and the University of Idaho has a good understanding of this relationship. All campus administrators need to understand the time and effort it takes to create and maintain those relationships. There needs to be an understanding of how Tribal leaderships change, and new relationships must continue to be created and formed to reaffirm the university's commitment.

JY: Face-to-face and genuine conversations between the president and Tribal governments are key. Tribal relations should never be based on whether or not the tribe has a casino. I visit the poorest and most remote reservation two times a year, while I visit the other eight tribes annually.

“One simple way to acknowledge tribal sovereignty is to use the term ‘nations’ instead of ‘tribes.’”

What suggestions can you offer non-Native practitioners for incorporating Tribal sovereignty into the administration and practice of student affairs?

PA: Starting with the notion of ‘place’ is essential. Being mindful of not only the location of respective institutions on Indigenous lands, but also becoming educated and being intentional about doing personal research on an institution's geographic proximity to Tribal nations, is key in the student development process. Land acknowledgments, when centered in the daily campus operations, speak volumes about an institution's commitment to, and value of, Indigenous peoples. Those acknowledgments can include: posting on university websites, the president's office website, and student affairs websites; prominent placement on course syllabi; and statements at convocation and commencement exercises and other large public convenings and events. Non-Native practitioners need to know it is okay not to have any or all

of the answers regarding Tribal sovereignty or Indigenous peoples and be vulnerable to judgment about knowledge gaps. Tribal liaisons are a tremendous resource available to student affairs staff.

ABB: One simple way to acknowledge Tribal sovereignty is to use the term ‘nations’ instead of ‘tribes.’ The onboarding for student affairs professionals at land-grant and other universities should include teaching the treaty, or treaties, which grant rights to United States citizens or visiting scholars to live and work on the ceded or unceded Indigenous land where their institutions are located. The onboarding for student affairs professionals should also include any state-issued executive orders affirming the Tribal sovereignty of the Indigenous nations of their state. The student affairs units of campus schools and colleges should encourage student affairs staff members to know the contemporary Native Nations in their state and to explore their Tribal websites.

YB: It often seems there is not an understanding of how much relationship building must occur to begin to make changes on campus. Change can only happen if the tribes are at the table and are in full consultation. The establishment of an MOU and advisory council at the University of Idaho has been a very effective way for the university to learn about what needs to happen to create a campus climate and culture that is welcoming and inclusive of Tribal communities. There are obstacles and the process is slow, but change can occur if there is long-term institutional commitment and recognition.

JY: Non-Native student affairs practitioners can have the same success as Native practitioners in the same position. It just takes them longer to earn trust. I was able to improve the University of Oregon's Tribal relations relatively quickly. Tribes in Oregon knew my family and my father, as he was a tribal council member for 30 years. I did not have to earn trust; I inherited it from my father. Establish ‘prez-to-rez’ relations through face-to-face contact. Always bring gifts, and expect nothing in return. Land-grant institutions were the beneficiaries of Tribal generosity and the trickery of treaties and U.S. government assimilation processes. Colleges and universities should be helping the poorest communities, allowing real access to higher education, which is the foundation of land-grant institutions. **LE**

Karen Francis-Begay (Diné) is assistant vice provost, Native American Initiatives, at the University of Arizona.





Situating Place Through Leadership Reflexivity

BY CHRISTINE A. NELSON AND ROBIN ZAPE-TAH-HOL-AH MINTHORN

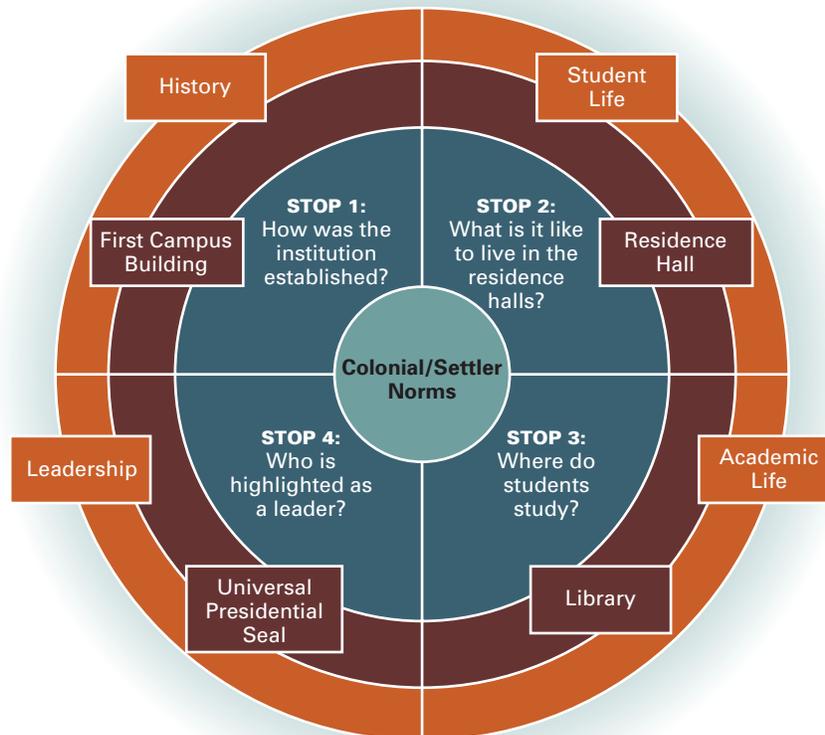
Writing in the *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs* in 2018, the authors of this column overtly named the systemic and oppressive values that college campuses perpetuate at the expense of Indigenous students and other students from communities with troubling pasts with colonization and genocide. By framing this discussion in a campus tour model in “Colonized and Racist Indigenous Campus Tour,” the authors can help non-Indigenous higher education administrators and staff better connect with how Indigenous students may feel during a campus tour that overtly glorifies colonial conquest narratives. Throughout the colonized and racist campus tour, the colonialist triumphs of the institution are

not highlighted. Rather, the embedded racist and genocidal values often cherished through dominant campus tours are uncovered. A campus tour framework helps disentangle how normative leadership approaches embody settler colonial logics. This column takes readers through a series of campus stops to unveil harmful narratives and demonstrate how institutional leaders can engage in reflexivity to understand the role of leadership in disrupting problematic institutional histories and narratives.

Settler Colonialism Within Institutional Histories and Narratives

Campuses will continue to be places of violence if institutional leaders do not actively discuss the embedded racist and

A Campus Tour Framework



Source: “Colonized and Racist Indigenous Campus Tour” by Robin Z. Minthorn and Christine A. Nelson (*Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs*, 2018)



genocidal values cherished by the institutional histories and narratives used during celebrations, anniversaries, and campus tours. It is problematic how administrators and staff see their campuses and how they may center colonial histories while silencing Indigenous histories and students in the process. Without engaging in leadership reflexivity, notions of settler colonialism and white supremacy will continue to infiltrate higher education and stifle its role in fighting for justice and liberation.

Institutional leaders must be self-reflexive about how they relate to settler colonialism. Higher education and student affairs leaders need to continually interrogate their privilege and place in relation to settler colonialism.

- ▶ How do you benefit as a person from occupying Indigenous land?
- ▶ How does your institution benefit and center a settler colonial narrative in its history and in the glorification of space and place?
- ▶ How are Indigenous peoples and Tribal Nations collaborated with to center their narrative and impact of settler colonialism?

“Institutional leaders must be self-reflexive about how they relate to settler colonialism.”

Accountability To Indigenous Communities

Institutional histories and narratives that perpetuate settler colonial logics inherently erase and minimize Indigenous voice and experience. Institutional leaders, student affairs leaders, and student leaders must be mindful of today's Indigenous populations and be held accountable for working consistently alongside Indigenous communities. Acknowledgment of and engagement with Indigenous peoples create space to discuss the level of visibility of Indigenous peoples and how their traditions and ways of being can be represented on campus. One practice that is growing in popularity is institutional land acknowledgment. Not all land acknowledgments are created equal or offer the same level of criticality. A land acknowledgment is more than simply stating whose lands the institution now occupies. Land acknowledgments require a paradigm shift to understand that land is not owned; land is a living entity that we must be in relation with.

Institutional leaders should be self-reflexive on how they build reciprocal relationships with local Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities.

- ▶ How has your institution benefited from the invisibilization and erasure of Indigenous peoples?
- ▶ How are Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities, including urban Indigenous communities, engaged in institutional decision making?
- ▶ Are accountability measures in place to ensure reciprocal relationships are fostered with Tribal Nations?
- ▶ What institutional support is in place for Indigenous students, staff, and faculty?

Revisit Existing Policies That Promote Colonialism

Institutional policy needs to be rewritten to formalize the role of community voice when developing and amending campus building names. A formal process would create consistency and honor an institution's commitment to be inclusive of Indigenous communities. The failure to institutionalize processes and protocols allows institutional leaders and administrators to continue oppressive practices rooted in settler colonialism. For institutional leaders to tout inclusivity, it is critical that physical campus space policies be assessed for inclusivity of Indigenous peoples.

Updated formal campus building naming policies could hold institutions accountable; institutions and campus leaders must interrogate the colonial representations across campus. Institutional leaders must be self-reflexive in reviewing the histories of current names of buildings and symbols on campus.

- ▶ How do colonial representations impact Indigenous and Black student communities?
- ▶ What are the next steps that can be taken to conduct a visual and historical mapping that identifies these colonial-centered structures and symbols?
- ▶ How will the institution be responsive to removing or replacing them?

These three broad topics—histories and narratives, accountability, and building names—are good starting points for institutional leaders to begin engaging in conversations around settler colonialism, genocide, and erasure. These prompts can help uncover colonial violence in higher education and foster places of liberation and justice. **LE**

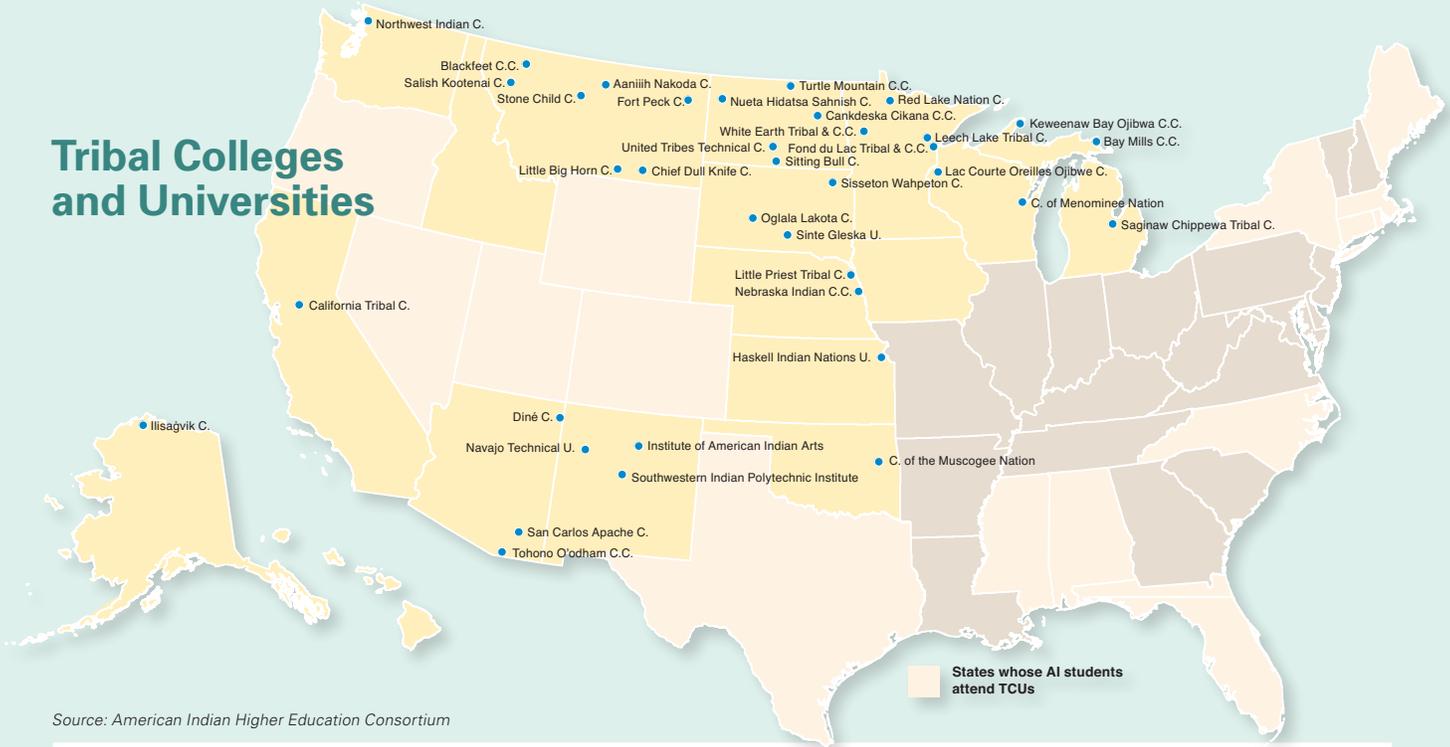
Chris A. Nelson (Kawaikaal/Diné) is assistant professor of higher education at the University of Denver, which resides on the traditional homelands of the Hinonoeino (Arapaho), Tsitsista (Cheyenne), and Nunt'zi (Ute) Nations.

Robin Zape-tab-hol-ab Minthorn (Kiowa/Apache/Nez Perce/Umatilla/Assiniboine) is associate professor, director of the doctoral program in education leadership, and director of Indigenous Education Initiatives in the School of Education at the University of Washington Tacoma, which is on the traditional homelands of the Puyallup Tribe of Indians.



Institutions Focus on Indigenous Peoples

Tribal Colleges and Universities



Source: American Indian Higher Education Consortium

Indigenous-Serving Institutions

Most tribal colleges and universities are located near Native communities, which allows them to offer degree programs within a Native learning environment full of culture and tradition.

Tribal Colleges and Universities

Institution	Town	State
Ilisagvik College	Storrs	AK
Diné College	Tsaile	AZ
Tohono O'odham Community College	Sells	AZ
Haskell Indian Nations University	Lawrence	KS
Bay Mills Community College	Brimley	MI
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College	L'Anse	MI
Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College	Mt Pleasant	MI
Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College	Cloquet	MN
Leech Lake Tribal College	Cass Lake	MN
Red Lake Nation College	Red Lake	MN
White Earth Tribal and Community College	Mahnomen	MN
Aaniiih Nakoda College (Ft. Belknap)	Harlem	MT
Blackfeet Community College	Browning	MT
Chief Dull Knife College	Lame Deer	MT
Fort Peck Community College	Popular	MT
Little Big Horn College	Crow Agency	MT

Institution	Town	State
Salish Kootenai College	Pablo	MT
Stone Child College	Box Elder	MT
Cankdeska Cikana Community College	Fort Totten	ND
Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College (Fort Berthold)	New Town	ND
Sitting Bull College	Fort Yates	ND
Turtle Mountain Community College	Belcourt	ND
United Tribes Technical College	Bismarck	ND
Little Priest Tribal College	Winnebago	NE
Nebraska Indian Community College	Macy	NE
Institute of American Indian Arts	Santa Fe	NM
Navajo Technical University	Crownpoint	NM
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Inst.	Albuquerque	NM
College of the Muscogee Nation	Okmulgee	OK
Sinte Gleska University	Mission	SD
Sisseton Wahpeton College	Sisseton	SD
Oglala Lakota College	Kyle	SD
Northwest Indian College	Olympia	WA
College of Menominee Nation	Green Bay	WI
Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Community College	Hayward	WI

Colleges and Universities listed as of October 2018 by American Indian Higher Education Consortium



Tribal colleges and universities are chartered by their respective tribal governments, including the 10 tribes within the largest reservations in the United States.

Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions

Some institutions are designated as Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions. These institutions:

- have 10 percent or more Indigenous-identifying student populations;
- are primarily two-year institutions, with many exceptions; and
- are primarily public institutions, with few exceptions.

Institution	Town	State
University of Alaska Anchorage-Kodiak College	Kodiak	AK
University of Alaska-Fairbanks	Fairbanks	AK
Northland Pioneer College	Holbrook	AZ
Fort Lewis College	Durango	CO
University of Minnesota-Morris	Morris	MN
Montana State University-Northern	Havre	MT
New Mexico State University-Grants	Grants	NM
San Juan College	Farmington	NM
Robeson Community College	Lumberton	NC
University of North Carolina at Pembroke	Pembroke	NC
East Central University	Ada	OK
University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma	Chickasaw	OK
Southeastern Oklahoma State University	Durant	OK
Redlands Community College	El Reno	OK
Northern Oklahoma College	Enid	OK
Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College	Miami	OK
Carl Albert State College	Poteau	OK
Seminole State College	Seminole	OK
Northeastern State University	Tahlequah	OK
Murray State College	Tishomingo	OK
Connors State College	Warner	OK
Eastern Oklahoma State College	Wilburton	OK
Utah State University-Eastern	Blanding	UT
Heritage University	Toppenish	WA

Reducing the Postsecondary Attainment Gap for American Indians and Alaska Natives: Linking Policy and Practice, Institutional Data Report, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2019

Source: Indigenous College Planning Guidebook (College Board, 2019)

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Source: American Indian Higher Education Consortium



Laws and Policies Assert Tribal Sovereignty in Higher Education

BY CHERYL CRAZY BULL, DAVID SANDERS, AND EMILY R. WHITE HAT

Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) successfully navigated affirmation of Tribal Nations' sovereignty through federal legislation that provides operational and programmatic support for the institutions. Located primarily on non-taxable rural reservation lands, TCUs had no tax base to support academic, vocational, and community education programming. Unlike other public institutions of higher education, TCUs, in their early days of operation in the 1970s, relied solely on affiliate relationships with other institutions and federal grants such as Community Action Program grants to support themselves. Diné College, formerly Navajo Community College, had the backing of congressional representatives for operational funding and stepped up to support the membership organization of the TCUs, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), in its pursuit of operational funding. This resulted in the 1978 Tribally Controlled Community

College Assistance Act (TCCCAA), which remains the key source of federal support for TCUs.

Many legislative acts and priorities for funding affirm the important place-based, culturally vital roles of TCUs, including legislation supporting land-grant programs, equity for Native students, and infrastructure. Research demonstrates that TCUs positively impact the quality of life of individual students, families, and communities. This positive impact is rooted in both the identity of physical place and the cultural revitalization of TCUs.

Two streams of legislative focus at the federal level, language revitalization and community-based research, represent the indigenizing of education discussed in *Power and Place: Indian Education in America* by Vine Deloria, Jr. and Daniel R. Wildcat (Fulcrum, 2001).

Knowledge of one's traditional language deepens the relationship to place, cultural traditions, identity, and self-expression and is central to Indigenous child development

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knowledge and practices. Access to programs for language acquisition and fluency improves outcomes for Native students at every level of development from early learners to college students to healthy, knowledgeable citizens.

Strengthening Tribal Identities

TCUs are unique in higher education largely because they are place-based institutions with the dual missions of providing postsecondary education and providing resources and programs that strengthen tribal identities and self-determination. In that context, funding to support culture and language programs is particularly essential. Legislation, such as the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006 (Pub. L. No. 109-394), supports revitalization of Native languages through immersion and restoration programs. In early 2020, AIHEC proposed the TCU Native American Language Vitalization and Training Program, a new grant program, as part of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965. This program supports grants for curriculum development and design, professional development for pre-kindergarten through grade 12 teachers and TCU faculty, research, and program delivery. Continued legislation supporting funding for Native language programs is critical to the federal government to uphold its treaty responsibilities to Tribal Nations.

“Access to programs for language acquisition and fluency improves outcomes for Native students at every level of development...”

Also vital to the sovereignty of Tribal Nations is community-based, responsive research that addresses tribal priorities and needs. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture offers five grant programs targeting Indian communities. Four of these grants support learning at TCUs while one specifically supports research at TCUs, the Tribal College Research Grant. Funded as part of TCU land-grant programming and the National Science Foundation Tribal College and University Program (NSF-TCUP), the grant is an example of place-based research that supports Tribal self-determination and helps the 1994 land-grant institutions build scientific capacity and provide a strong foundation in research knowledge for students.



Research at TCUs

NSF-TCUP supports TCU STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education, research, and outreach by increasing Native individuals' participation in STEM careers and improving the quality of STEM programs at TCUP-eligible institutions. TCUs develop programming that supports institutional capacity as well as student and faculty quantitative and qualitative research skills and presentation competencies.

These research opportunities establish a culture of research at TCUs, which builds faculty and student capabilities, highlights place-based needs and opportunities, encourages TCU participation in the broader scientific community, and supports research and data sovereignty of tribes. TCUs demonstrate to their tribes they can provide the research capacity often enjoyed by state institutions on behalf of their state governments.

Early each calendar year, TCUs and AIHEC produce legislative priorities that focus on providing sustained support for TCU operations and creating new opportunities to expand contributions of TCUs to Tribal sovereignty and the broader social and economic well-being of society. The American Indian College Fund supports legislative priorities through public education expanding the network of Indian education advocates. **LE**

Cheryl Crazy Bull (Sicangu Lakota) is president and chief executive officer of the American Indian College Fund.

David Sanders (Oglala Sioux Tribe) is vice president, research, evaluation, and faculty development at the American Indian College Fund.

Emily R. White Hat (Sicangu Lakota, Aske Gluwipi Tiospaye) is vice president of programs at the American Indian College Fund.



Cultural Perspectives on Supporting Student Development

Q What cultural metaphor or lens most embodies your personal theory in supporting the education and development of Indigenous students on your campus?

Rooted and Responsive

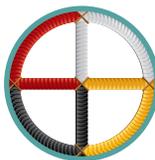
“The ‘āli‘i is a metaphor, teacher, and ancestor. It is a Hawaiian shrub known for its rootedness (it has a taproot), resiliency and flexibility (it has a very flexible trunk and is known for withstanding high winds), and responsiveness to the communities (different parts of the plant are used for medicine, beauty, and building). The Hawaiian proverb captures the essence: “He ‘āli‘i kū makani mai au; ‘āohe makani nāna e kūlā‘i!” (I am a wind withstanding ‘āli‘i, no wind can topple me over.) We look to the ‘āli‘i as a model of what we want to be, the leaders we want to shape, and the communities we hope to foster.”



Kaiwipunikauikawēkiu Lipe (Native Hawaiian), Native Hawaiian affairs program officer, Office of the President; director, Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Campus Center, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa; and interim director, Institute for Hawaiian Language Research and Translation

Medicine Wheel As Framework

“My personal theory is best embodied by the medicine wheel, a sacred symbol among Native northern plains peoples. The medicine wheel’s interior comprises four equal quadrants that represent four areas (spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical) necessary to maintain and achieve balance. At Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College, in New Town, North Dakota, the goal is to not only create educational conditions that support the holistic growth of Nueta, Hidatsa, and Sahnish students but to build an environment where their worldviews help shape their definitions for success and leadership. The medicine wheel provides a Dakota-focused and human-centered framework for understanding student development and emphasizes the importance of keeping balance, which profoundly impacts students’ educational outcomes.”



Robert Rainbow (Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa/Spirit Lake Tribe/Standing Rock Sioux Tribe), vice president of academics, Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College

Three Sisters Theory

“My personal theory is similar to growing a ‘three sisters’ garden. You see maize, beans, and squash grow better together than they do alone. Each is unique, but they flourish in partnership. Universities and colleges will only succeed when students, faculty, and staff, like the three sisters, grow together, support each other, and work together. It is essential to provide opportunities for students—with faculty and administrators—to develop trust, respect, and empowerment for themselves and their communities. We learn and rise together as a community.”



Matthew Makomenaw (Grand Traverse Bay Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians), director, Native American Cultural Center and assistant dean, Yale College, Yale University

A Sacred Site

“My theory embodies the sacredness of the landscape and cultural narratives relating to the sacred Black Hills. The Cheyenne people have a continued spiritual relationship to one of their most sacred sites within the Black Hills region called Noahvose or the ‘place where people were taught.’ Providing a learning experience where students, faculty, and staff can live, learn, and walk in balance together acknowledges that notion of the sacred. We have a responsibility to listen to the stories of the land and to protect our communities and futures through education. If we can walk through this experience as relatives, we will build a future of resiliency and respect.”



Urla Marcus (Northern Cheyenne), director, Center for American Indian Studies, Black Hills State University

It Takes a Network

“Years ago, Verizon promoted its wireless services with the slogan, ‘It’s the network,’ often showing individuals using cell phones with a parade of technicians following to keep the network working smoothly. The image, of one person unknowingly supported by a parade of people, is the metaphor I return to in my work. Every Native student I work with has a family, a community, a tribe, and ancestors behind him/her/they. This network loves and cares for students and prays every day they are strong and protected. My job is to support the needs of students, while simultaneously understanding and supporting the hopes and prayers of their network.”



Shelly Lowe (Navajo), executive director, Harvard University Native American Program



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Holistic Approaches to Serving Native American Communities

Two Arizona Universities Take Leading Roles

BY CHAD HAMILL AND JACOB MOORE

Northern Arizona University (NAU), which sits on traditional homelands of many Native nations, is unique in its strategic goal to become the leading university serving Native Americans. Tasked with advancing that goal, the Office of Native American Initiatives—while working with Native nations and communities on areas of importance to them—is focused on providing an unparalleled level of cultural support to its Native American students, who come from more than 110 Tribal nations to attend NAU.

The university's Native American Cultural Center (NACC) serves as a home away from home. "Supporting students the Indigenous way," the Indigenous approach to programming, centers on academics, health and well-being, social outreach, and cultural learning. Located at the heart of campus, the

NACC is a 12,000-square-foot facility designed to meet student needs. Equipped with a computer lab, library, and study area, the NACC also has a story room that provides a ventilated, safe, and private space for students to smudge, pray, tell stories, complete coursework, or just hang out. The NACC kitchen hosts a free beverage station with coffee and tea, and healthy snacks sustain students throughout the day. For many events, the Office of Native American Initiatives partners with the Office of Indigenous Student Success (OISS) team; both are "housemates" at the NACC.

OISS's mission is to support undergraduate and graduate students (Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and other students who identify as Indigenous). One of its signature programs is the annual four-day residential Indige-Bridge to Success Program for incoming first-year Indigenous



Northern Arizona University's Native American Cultural Center serves as a home away from home.



students held one week before the fall term begins. First-year students who attend Indige-Bridge increase their self-confidence, learn about campus technology and resources, get settled in housing, make friends, and celebrate their Indigenous heritage. Included in the Indige-Bridge program is the Indige-Peer Mentorship Program, which connects new

“It is important to reclaim our narrative... When we see our community, we see strength, compassion, determination, and love.”

Indigenous students with seasoned Indigenous students, who have learned to navigate college life. Indige-Peer Mentors provide one-to-one guidance and host activities and events with their mentees. These programs, offered to students throughout their time at NAU, improve retention and graduation rates and create a vibrant culture of support.

Arizona State University Follows Tribal Consultation Policy

Arizona State University is located on the ancestral homelands of many Indigenous Tribal Nations, including the Akimel O’odham (Pima) and Pee Posh (Maricopa). With 22 federally recognized Tribal governments in the state of Arizona, ASU is uniquely positioned to admit and graduate high numbers of American Indian students and partner with Tribal nations and communities.

The Arizona Board of Regents approved Tribal Consultation Policy ABOR 1-118 (the Consultation Policy) on February 16, 2016. The primary purpose of the policy is to ensure that the three state universities—Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and University of Arizona—recognize Tribal sovereignty and commit to government-to-government consultation related to all aspects of research within the boundaries of federally recognized tribes and other issues of mutual interest such as student success.

The Tribal Consultation Policy provides a framework to address sensitive issues, such as human subject research and university collections of cultural patrimony and creates an opportunity for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students to enhance their academic experience with stakeholder engagement in respectful and meaningful ways.

ASU launched a “Doing Research in Indian Country” two-day conference in 2017 to honor the intent of the policy; the event includes Tribal representatives, health providers, researchers, and students. The primary benefits to students include: exposure to research, a greater understanding of the importance of tribally driven research and the role of community in research, strategies to succeed in PhD programs, and opportunities to meet potential mentors. Doreen Bird (Kewa Pueblo) a conference keynote speaker, notes, “For 15 years, I had been reading the scientific literature on American Indian and Alaska Natives and much of what was written is negative.” She adds, “It is important to reclaim our narrative because we do not see ourselves as diseased or traumatized or poor. When we see our community, we see strength, compassion, determination, and love.”

These enhanced community engagements carry out formal consultation policies with sovereign Tribal governments and also create tangible opportunities for AI/AN students to see themselves in scholarly research that is truly aligned with the cultures and communities they come from and, often times, return to. **LE**

Chad Hamill (Spokane) is vice president for Native American Initiatives at Northern Arizona University.

Jacob Moore (Tohano O’odham, Akimel O’odham, Lakota, Dakota) is associate vice president for tribal relations at Arizona State University.

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Remembering Our Piko: Kuleana to Mauna Kea

BY JENNIFER MĀHEALANI AH SING QUIRK

Kānaka ‘Ōiwi (Kānaka, Native Hawaiian), the Indigenous peoples of Hawai‘i, have thrived in the middle of the Pacific Ocean since time immemorial. The piko, the umbilical cord of Native Hawaiians, connects Kānaka to ‘āina, the land that has fed and cultivated the physical and spiritual essence of the mo‘oku‘auhau (genealogy). This genealogical connection to ‘āina is a reminder of kuleana, a duality of both the privilege and obligation Kānaka have to the natural world.

Mauna a Wākea, also known as Mauna Kea, is the firstborn child of Papahānaumoku, earth mother, and Wākea, sky father. Mauna a Wākea is recognized as the elder sibling

Through Mauna a Wākea, there is a clear misalignment between an institution that claims to be a “Hawaiian place of learning” and its actions to sever Kānaka from the piko. Native Hawaiian Affairs Program Officer Kaiwipuni “Punihei” Lipe has noted that every institution of higher education in the United States (and its territories like Guam and Puerto Rico) sits upon Indigenous lands and further amasses significant resources from those lands. Extending this conceptualization broadly, it is appropriate to assert that all lands are Indigenous. Thus, the failure of higher education leaders to meaningfully engage Indigenous communities in the future of their land, as illustrated in the TMT case, is both unethical and negligent.

Western ideologies of progress have expedited TMT even with decades of chronicled opposition from Kānaka, environmentalists, and other concerned stakeholders, including cautionary findings documented in environmental impact statements. The mauna has risen as a critical tipping point in the Native Hawaiian community, more than just for Kānaka ‘Ōiwi but for Hawai‘i as a whole. It has been able to achieve something that no other Hawaiian movement has done in the past: It has grown into a unifying cause creating a space for folx to reconnect to their piko and remember their relations to land and to one another. Mauna a Wākea is emblematic of what can be achieved collectively for Native Hawaiians and allies alike when action and intention is grounded in piko. It has created opportunities and space for people to learn, build community, be self-determined, and find voice.

It is critical for higher education institutions to recognize and acknowledge the implications of their actions on Indigenous communities that are also higher education stakeholders. Who benefits the most from initiatives such as TMT? Who benefits the least? Whose voices are heard and whose participation is valued? These questions are useful in understanding which traditional perspectives are privileged and preserved; either that of institutions or Kānaka ‘Ōiwi. Vice presidents for student affairs and other higher education administrators can take action to support Indigenous colleagues, students, and communities by looking inward, reconnecting to their piko, and taking time to consider their own positions of power and kuleana in their institutions. Perhaps by engaging in such self-reflection, administrators will return to their piko and remember that all of us are of a place. **LE**

Jennifer Māhealani Ah Sing Quirk (Kānaka ‘Ōiwi), is director of the Graduate Professional Access Program in the Office of Student Equity, Excellence and Diversity at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.

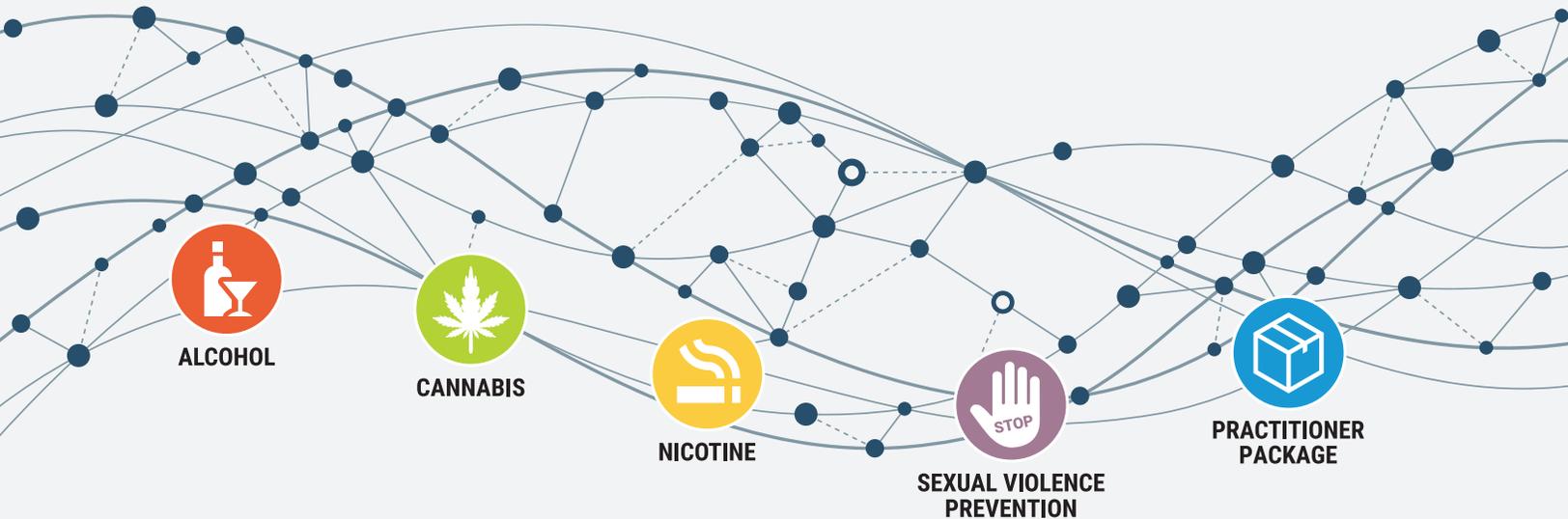


University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa students at Wise Field protest in front of Bachman Hall (administration building) as they wait to hear from President David Lassner.

of the kalo (taro) and Kānaka. Revered as the most sacred ‘āina in Hawai‘i for its impressive reach into the heavens, its unparalleled clarity for stargazing, and its essential function as a water-gatherer for Hawai‘i Island, Mauna a Wākea has become a site of resistance and empowerment with the planned construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) atop the mountain’s pristine summit. The development of TMT is led by the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and supported by the State of Hawai‘i as well as several prestigious national and international higher education institutions and private foundations.



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