



# BECOMING VISIBLE

*A Landscape Analysis  
of State Efforts  
to Provide  
Native American  
Education for All*





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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was completed with generous support from the Wend Collective. The views expressed in this report are solely of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of Wend Collective.

We would like to thank Jodi Archambault of Wend Collective, Nicholas Courtney of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), Yvette Roubideaux the NCAI Policy Research Center, Deb Halliday of Halliday & Associates, Mandy Smoker-Broadus of Education Northwest, Crystal Echo Hawk, Leah Salgado and Faye Brown of IllumiNative, Diana Cournoyer of the National Indian Education Association (NIEA), Sedelta Oosahwee of the National Education Association, Council of Chief State School Officers, the American Institute for Research, and the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly for their wisdom, advice, and contributions to this report. We want to thank the many people and organizations who made this report possible, including education policy and advocacy practitioners at the national, regional, tribal, and local levels. We especially want to thank the staff at state education agencies across the country who took time to share information about their states' efforts. Please know that the work you do each day to ensure all students learn about the rich histories and contemporary lives of Native peoples is more important than ever, and we thank you.

*National Congress of American Indians (2019). Becoming Visible: A Landscape Analysis of State Efforts to Provide Native American Education for All. Washington, DC. September 2019.*



# DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITIONS FOR THIS REPORT
Academic Standards	Refers to desired learning outcomes of education
American Indian and Alaska Native	Refers to persons belonging to the tribal nations of the continental United States (American Indians) and the tribes of Alaska (Alaska Natives)
Content	Refers to educational materials that are used in classroom instruction
Curriculum	Refers to instructional programming designed to help students reach desired academic standards or outcomes
K-12 Education	Refers to education for Kindergarten and 1st through 12th grade in the United States
Native American	In this report, refers to all indigenous peoples of the United States, with a focus on American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Hawaiians
Native American Education	Refers to education <i>about</i> Native Americans to the United States
Native American Curriculum	Refers to a curriculum used in schools to teach <i>about</i> Native Americans in the United States
Native Peoples	In this report, refers to indigenous peoples in the United States
Tribal Nation	Refers inclusively to the hundreds of distinct tribal governments and their citizens, who have inherent sovereign rights to govern their own lands and affairs, and a government-to-government relationship with the United States



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Native Americans are unfortunately invisible to many. Most Americans likely have attended or currently attend a school where information about Native Americans is either completely absent from the classroom or relegated to brief mentions, negative information, or inaccurate stereotypes. This results in an enduring and damaging narrative regarding Native peoples, tribal nations, and their citizens. Even though some exceptional efforts are happening around the country to bring accurate, culturally responsive, tribally specific, and contemporary content about Native Americans into mainstream education systems, much work remains to be done.

This report is an analysis of the landscape of current state efforts to bring high-quality educational content about Native peoples and communities into all kindergarten to 12th grade (K-12) classrooms across the United States. **The aims of this analysis are as follows:**

1. To conduct a landscape analysis to determine the extent to which states require or provide support for Native American K-12 curricula to ALL public school students; and
2. To review the policies, laws, and practices that states currently use to authorize, provide, or improve the delivery of their Native American K-12 curriculum.

The project team conducted a literature review, interviews, and a survey of the 35 states with federally recognized tribal nations and their analysis included the following results:

- Almost 90 percent of states surveyed said they have **current efforts underway to improve the quality of and access** to Native American curriculum;<sup>1</sup>
- A majority of the states surveyed indicated that **Native American education is included in their content standards**, but far fewer states *require* Native American education curriculum to be taught in public schools;
- Less than half of the states reported that **Native American education curricula is required** in their state and that it is **specific to tribal nations** in their state;
- Barriers to providing Native American educational content in classrooms include the lack of **access to curricula**, lack of adequate **funding and state support** for staff, technical assistance, professional development and evaluation, and lack of **policies to expand Native American curriculum** beyond social studies/history subject areas; and
- Current avenues for advancing adoption of Native American curricula include state legislation mandating **collaboration between state education agencies and tribal nations**, state legislation empowering or requiring state education agencies to **develop curriculum**, and state education agency policy to develop **culturally responsive guidelines** for local districts.

This report is intended to inform key stakeholders about the current state of Native American education for all students in K-12 schools and provides recommendations for catalyzing the implementation of meaningful Native American education policies, curricula, and professional development. The key stakeholders of interest for this document are tribal governments, state education agencies, Indian education advocates, tribal colleges and state universities, foundations, and policymakers who are interested in or who are currently working to advance quality Native American K-12 education at the national level, in their tribal nation, state, and/or in their local community.

The report is organized into six sections: (1) Introduction, (2) Methodology, (3) Key Findings, (4) State Profiles, (5) Conclusion, and (6) an Appendix featuring a tool kit of helpful resources and references for advocates and policymakers.

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document, we used the term “Native American education” to include education about Native peoples in the United States, and this term includes “Indian education” which is used usually in the context of the Bureau of Indian Education schools and funding. The terms Native Americans and Native peoples are used interchangeably throughout the document.



# INTRODUCTION

Native Americans are a vibrant and growing population with rich, distinct cultures and histories in the United States. However, Native peoples are invisible to most Americans.<sup>2</sup> The 2016–2018 *Reclaiming Native Truth* (RNT) project – the largest research and strategy setting initiative ever conducted by and for Native peoples – found that the invisibility of Native peoples is pervasive and entrenched across all sectors of American society. A startling 72 percent of Americans rarely encounter or receive information about Native Americans.

Education is one of the most powerful opinion shaping systems in America. The RNT research demonstrates that K-12 education is a key driver of invisibility and false narratives about Native peoples. The RNT research found:

- Eighty seven (87) percent of state history standards do not mention Native American history after 1900;<sup>3</sup> and
- Twenty seven (27) states make no mention of a single Native American in their K-12 curriculum.

<sup>2</sup>ReclaimingNative Truth(2018). Research Findings: Compilation of All Research. EchoHawk Consulting&First Nations Development Institute, June 2018, Accessed on September 15, 2019 at: <https://illuminatives.org/reclaiming-native-truth/>.

<sup>3</sup>Shear S.B., Knowles R.T., Soden G.J. & Castro A.J. (2015) Manifesting Destiny: Re/presentations of Indigenous Peoples in K-12 U.S. History Standards. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 2015; 43:1, 68-101. Accessed on September 15, 2019 at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2014.999849>



Invisibility, myths, and stereotypes about Native peoples perpetuated through K-12 education are reinforced across society, resulting in an enduring and damaging narrative regarding tribal nations and their citizens. The impact is profound. Native Americans live in a culture where they are often misunderstood, stereotyped, and experience racism on a daily basis.<sup>4</sup> The lack of accurate knowledge about Native Americans contributes to these experiences and hinders the ability of all Americans to experience and celebrate the unique cultural identities, histories, and contributions of Native peoples.<sup>5</sup>

***“Native peoples are invisible to most Americans.”***

*– Reclaiming Native Truth*

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) is the oldest, largest, and most representative national organization serving the broad interests of tribal nations. NCAI works to advance and protect the inherent sovereign rights of tribal nations. Advocacy for those rights is hampered by stereotypes and a general lack of knowledge about Native Americans among non-Native Americans. Tribal leaders and advocates must spend innumerable hours educating state governments, Congressional and Administrative staff, and leaders on the issues Native Americans face in contemporary America and how their sovereign rights are rooted in their unique history. The need to constantly educate elected officials is a result, in part, of the miseducation they received in the K-12 school system.

The invisibility of Native peoples and the erasure of contemporary Native Americans’ contributions, innovations, and accomplishments in K-12 education fuels harmful biases in generation after generation of Americans who grow up learning a false, distorted narrative about Native Americans. In most schools, information about Native peoples is either completely absent from the classroom or relegated to brief mentions, negative information, antiquated references, or inaccurate stereotypes. According to the RNT research, teaching students accurate Native history is not enough to break through the invisibility and stereotypes that feed and perpetuate bias and racism; it is also imperative to teach about contemporary Native issues and the accomplishments of Native peoples today.

These findings underscore the importance of the decades-long effort of the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) along with Native American education advocates, students, parents, and tribal nations to transform curricula in the American K-12 public school system in all states to teach an accurate history of Native Americans as well as educate about contemporary Native peoples, tribal nations, and their issues. NIEA works to advance comprehensive, culture-based educational opportunities for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians by promoting educational sovereignty, supporting continuing use of traditional knowledge and language, and improving educational opportunities and results in Native communities.

<sup>4</sup>Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, 2007; 62(4):271-286. Accessed on September 15, 2019 at: <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271>

<sup>5</sup>Spring J. (2016). *Deculturalization and the Struggle For Equality: a Brief History Of the Education Of Dominated Cultures in the United States: Eight Edition*. United Kingdom: Routledge. View at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315652368>.

IllumiNative was founded in 2018 with a mandate to translate the RNT research into action within society's key opinion shaping sectors – K-12 education, pop culture, and the media. IllumiNative's work with its partners is part of a growing movement to amplify contemporary Native voices and stories and advance narrative change efforts to set the record straight about Native peoples.

Exceptional narrative change efforts are happening around the country to bring accurate, culturally responsive, tribally specific, and contemporary content about Native Americans into mainstream education systems. Given the systems-level effort needed to change the endemic level of invisibility and bias in education, much work remains to be done. The purpose of this report was to conduct an analysis of the landscape of current state efforts to bring high-quality educational content about Native peoples into all K-12 classrooms across the United States. The aims of this analysis are as follows:

- 1. To conduct a landscape analysis to determine the extent to which states require and/or provide support for Native American K-12 curricula to ALL public school students; and**
- 2. To review the policies, laws, and practices that states currently use to authorize, provide, or improve the delivery of Native American K-12 curriculum.**

This report will be disseminated through a collaborative effort by NCAI, IllumiNative, and NIEA in order to raise awareness about the findings and galvanize action to advance *Native American Education for All*. The research and movement for Native American Education for All stands on the shoulders of many Native American education leaders, activists, and organizations across the country. We honor and acknowledge their important and ongoing contributions. This report and the call to action it signals is a platform to build momentum, engagement and support for a movement of many movements to transform K-12 education to accurately represent Native peoples' cultures, histories, diversity, contributions, and contemporary place in today's society. NCAI, IllumiNative, and NIEA are honored to be a part of this effort.



# METHODOLOGY

## SETTING

The focus of this report is on state education policies and programs that support culturally responsive Native K-12 curricula for public schools. While Native American curricula and education efforts are often referred to as Native American education, Native education or “Indian education,” this report uses the term Native American education or Native American curriculum/curricula. In order to adapt or implement Native American curricula in K-12 schools, several areas must be addressed, especially since public school curricula falls under the purview of state and local leaders. These areas include state policies, funding, dedicated staff, and other state efforts such as direct tribal involvement in the creation of curriculum.

Given that efforts to adopt and implement Native American curricula in schools are not currently widespread, the report team chose to focus on the 35 states where federally recognized tribal nations reside. All states have a responsibility to provide accurate information about Native peoples in their public schools, and these states have a particular obligation to the citizens of their state. During the landscape analysis, the state of Hawaii<sup>6</sup> and the city of Chicago (Illinois) were added due to their potential contribution to the analysis. Throughout this report, the results are only described for the states reviewed in this study, and cannot be generalized to all states. The project team acknowledges that Native Americans reside in all states, and not all Native Americans are members of federally recognized tribal nations. However, the landscape analysis was limited to the states as described above to focus resources and efforts.

<sup>6</sup> Native Hawaiians are an indigenous group in the United States that to date does not have the same federal recognition and sovereign status as AI/AN federally recognized tribal nations.

## SAMPLE AND METHODS

In order to learn (1) the extent to which states require and/or provide support for Native American K-12 curriculum to ALL public school students; and (2) the policies, laws, and practices that that states currently use to authorize, provide, or improve the delivery of their Native American K-12 curriculum, the project team performed a literature review of research, reports, and recent media publications; conducted key informant interviews with national education leaders; and implemented a survey with state education agency contacts in the states under review for this report.

**The literature review was conducted** to find current research, reports, recent media reports, and other sources to begin the analysis of policies, programs, and existing efforts to adopt Native American curricula in K-12 schools. This information was used as background information for the report.

After completing the literature review, the **team conducted key informant interviews** of several experts on Native American education in the states to assess the broad landscape and gather preliminary information on state efforts. **Next, the team surveyed at least one key informant in each state to determine:**

- Whether there were any existing policies or laws to require Native American curricula be taught across all schools in the state;
- Whether there were full-time employees dedicated to Native American education in the state;
- Whether there was any funding to implement the Native American curriculum in the state;
- Whether tribal governments were engaged in the development of Native American curricula; and
- Any experiences with these efforts – successes, challenges, barriers.

The team sought to identify key staff at each of the state education agencies. Not all state education agencies have designated Native American education staff; in these states, researchers contacted the State Governor's Office to identify appropriate contacts. The team chose to focus on state education agency staff rather than on tribal education staff or Native American education advocates since it is the responsibility of state education agencies to oversee public education, including the development and adoption of state content standards and assessments. Authority for efforts to expand classroom instruction through K-12 policy and practice lies within state education agencies.

## ANALYSIS

The project team analyzed the results of the key informant survey to determine the number of states that reported having curricula and/or policies on Native American education. The results were analyzed for each state, and then summarized in the following areas:

1. state policy and resources;
2. levels of collaboration with tribal governments; and
3. curriculum implementation efforts.

Results were calculated according to the number and percent responding to each question, with the denominator being the 28 states that responded.

Next, the information from each of the three areas listed above was reviewed for each state, and a list of **“Native American Education Opportunity States”** was developed using a ranking system as described below:

- Results from the three areas of questions from the survey (state policy and resources; levels of collaboration with tribal governments; and curriculum implementation efforts) were compiled for each state. States were then **ranked on a scale of 0-4 based on their answers to questions in each of the three areas, with a higher score meaning more substantial Native American education resources or efforts are in place.**
- **The first area, state policy and resources**, focused on determining whether the state had Native American education laws, policies and allocated resources in place. The questions in this area included whether or not the state required their K-12 system to teach a Native American education curriculum, whether or not the state had any policies to provide essential understanding for educators, whether or not the state provided funding to implement Native American education curriculum, and finally, the number of full-time employees (FTEs) dedicated to Native American education within the state education office. A state was given a score of 4 if they answered “yes” to at least three of the questions above, allocated funds for Native American curriculum, and had at least one FTE. A state was given a score of three if they answered “yes” to at least three of the questions above and had at least one FTE, OR if they answered “yes” to at least two of the questions above and had funding allocated for Native American curriculum. A state was given a score of two if they answered “yes” to at least two of the questions above. A state was given a score of one if they answered “yes” to at least one of the questions above and had at least one FTE. A state was given a score of 0 if they did not answer “yes” to any question and did not have FTEs or funding for Native American curriculum.
- **The second area, levels of collaboration with tribal governments**, included a ranking system that took into account whether or not there are current efforts in the state to expand the quality of and access to Native American education curriculum, whether or not there were any tribal governments or Native American education experts consulted or involved in the development of curriculum, the extent to which tribal governments engaged in the advocacy and support for Native American curriculum (on a scale of 1-4 meaning “not-at-all” to “a high amount”), and

lastly whether or not tribal nations in their state provided funds in support of Native American education. A state was given a score of four if they answered “yes” to all three questions and had “high” tribal engagement. A state was given a score of three if they answered “yes” to all three questions and had “moderate” tribal engagement. A state was given a score of two if they answered “yes” to all three questions or if they answered “yes” to two questions and had “moderate” tribal engagement. A state was given a score of one if they had answered “yes” to at least two questions and had a “small” amount of tribal engagement. A state was given a score of 0 if they did not answer yes to any of the questions and did not engage with tribal governments.

- **The third area, curriculum implementation efforts**, included a ranking system that took into account whether or not a state has adopted stand-alone Native American education standards, the extent to which Native American curriculum is available and specific to tribal nations within the state, whether or not the state provides opportunities for professional development (PD) in Native American education for K-12 teachers, and lastly whether or not a state formally evaluates the implementation of Native American curriculum in K-12 schools. A state was given a score of four if they had stand-alone standards and Native American curriculum that is specific to tribal nations within the state and has PD available to teachers. A state was given a score of three if the state has curriculum related to tribal nations within the state, and PD is available to teachers. A score of two was given if a state has PD available to teachers regarding any tribal curriculum. A state was given a score of 1 if they did not include stand-alone standards or curriculum related to Native Americans and did not offer PD.
- **Lastly, the sum of the three area scores for each state were compiled into a summary score ranging from 0-12.** States were then grouped by their summary score into three groups (0-5, 6-8, and 9-12). The grouping of states was not intended to rank states; the groupings are meant to provide a way to organize the information about states into groups where the states are in similar places in their implementation and support of Native American education.

Based on the results of the summary scores, one state was selected from each of the three groups for more in-depth analysis. The team decided to conduct additional interviews with State Indian Education Directors in Oregon, Nebraska, and Minnesota to create profiles of each of the state’s current efforts to expand or enhance Native American curriculum in their public schools.

The team only gathered information on aspects of state programs, policies, and educational curricula in the states that responded and did not gather any identifiable information or characteristics of the key informants who responded to the survey. The purpose of the project was to inform advocacy efforts and it was not designed to be generalized to all states or to advance a field of research.

## LIMITATIONS

The report focuses on responses from states with federally recognized tribal nations as well as Hawaii and Illinois (Chicago only). The results do not include any information about the non-responding states or the remaining 13 states that were not recruited to complete the key informant survey. As a result, the findings are not generalizable beyond the responses of the 28 participating states.

Identifying the right key informant in each state was sometimes a challenge, especially if the state had little to no efforts in adopting Native American education in their schools. Activities varied from state to state, and the key informants indicated that they responded to the survey as comprehensively as possible with information available to them at the time. Reasons for states not responding included the following: they did not have a staff person who could answer the questions; they did not have active Native American education efforts (thus deeming the survey not relevant); or they declined due to time, staff, or agency capacity constraints. Several respondents indicated that they responded to the best of their ability, but sometimes with limited knowledge of the full scope of all efforts in the state.

The project team did not talk with tribal education staff or representatives from tribal nations in the states, which would have likely added important information to the analysis. However, the focus of this report on state efforts is an important first step in creating change so that all schools have accurate and effective Native American curricula.



## KEY FINDINGS

Overall, 28 of the 37 states responded to the key informant survey. The 28 states that responded included 26 states with federally recognized tribal nations, Hawaii, and Illinois (Chicago only). This section focuses on the results of the survey of key informants in the 28 states that responded to the survey.

### STATE RESOURCES – PUBLIC FUNDS TO IMPLEMENT NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION

The landscape analysis included questions on state resources available to implement Native American education and curricula. The work of developing and/or assisting with the implementation of Native American education curriculum is an investment that requires both human and financial resources. When an investment is made in both areas, it allows for development, increased focus, communication, technical assistance, and support that is extremely valuable to districts, schools, and educators.

***Only 1/3 of states surveyed allocate funding for Native American education curricula.***



Overall, nine (or one-third) of the states surveyed indicated that their state allocates funding to implement Native American education curriculum. Activities supported by these funds included staffing, development of curriculum or other teaching materials, professional development, grants, and conferences. **Table 1** illustrates the range of funding dedicated to Native American curricula in the nine states. Interestingly, in all but one of these states, the amount of dedicated funding was above \$100,000.

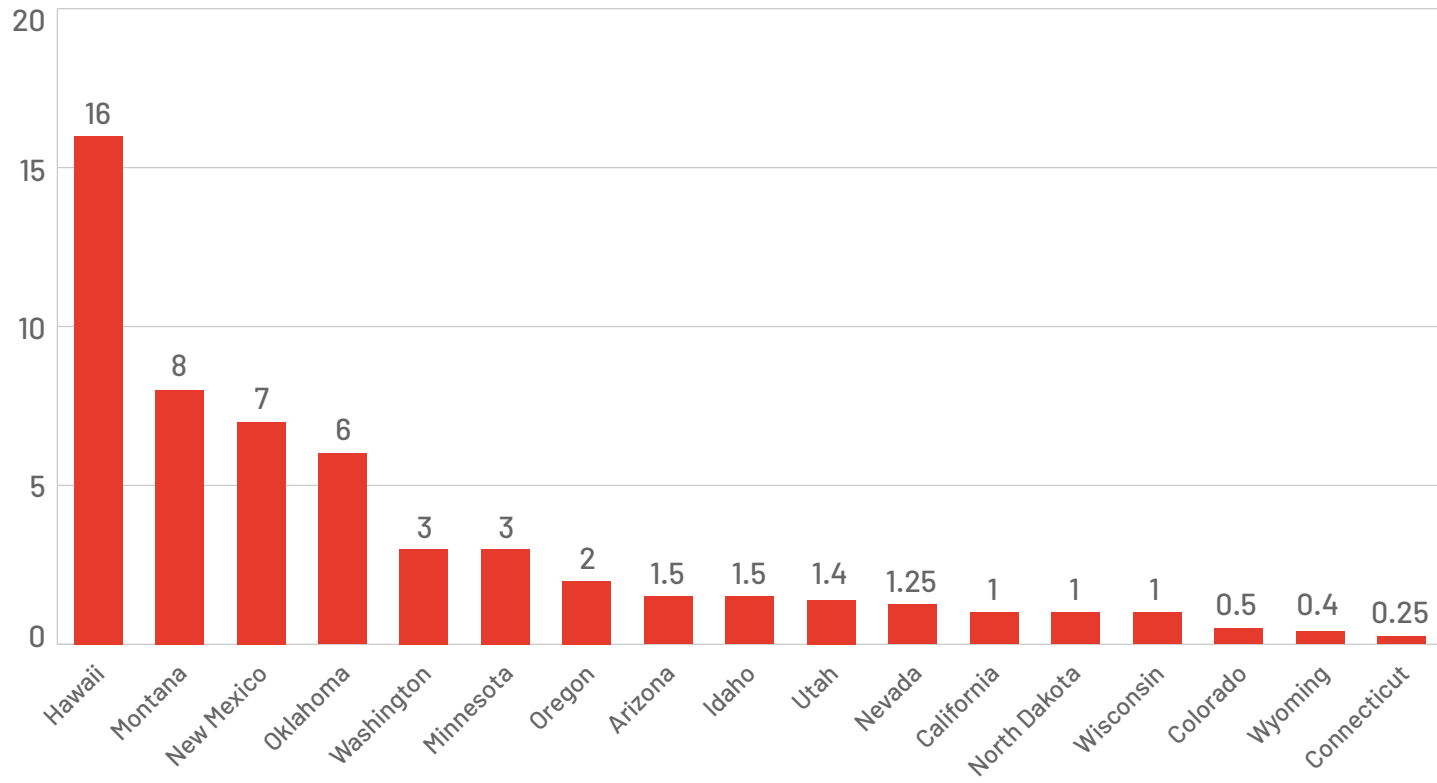
**Table 1. Amount of Funding to Implement Native American Education Curricula**

STATE	\$0-\$10,000	>\$10,000 - \$100,000	ABOVE \$100,000
Hawaii			X
Idaho			X
Montana			X
New Mexico			X
North Dakota			X
Oklahoma	X		
Oregon			X
Washington			X
Wisconsin			X

*Note: Table 1 only includes states that answered “yes” to the question on whether state provided “any funding to implement Indian education curricula.”*

The analysis also found that two-thirds (18 out of 28) of states surveyed have full-time or part-time staff dedicated to implementing Native American education (**Figure 1**). Not all states have a Native American Education or similarly named division or unit; in those cases, staff are often placed in other state education agency work areas, such as Title I or in an equity division. When there is a partial FTE designation, this usually indicates the staff person is responsible for other duties unrelated to advancing Native American education efforts in their state.

**Figure 1. Number of FTEs Dedicated to Native American Education in State Education Agency**



*Note: Chart does not include States that answered "none" or that had general diversity staff and not Native American education specific staff.*

## **NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION STANDARDS, CURRICULUM, AND CONTENT**

Eighty-two (82) percent of the states responding to the survey (23 out of 28) reported including Native American education in their state standards, primarily in social studies. This finding is not surprising due to the likely ease of integrating Native American references in history into existing social science content. While respondents were not asked about whether these references were accurate or not, other research and experience has shown that while these Native American references might be included in curricula, such references are often inaccurate.<sup>7</sup>

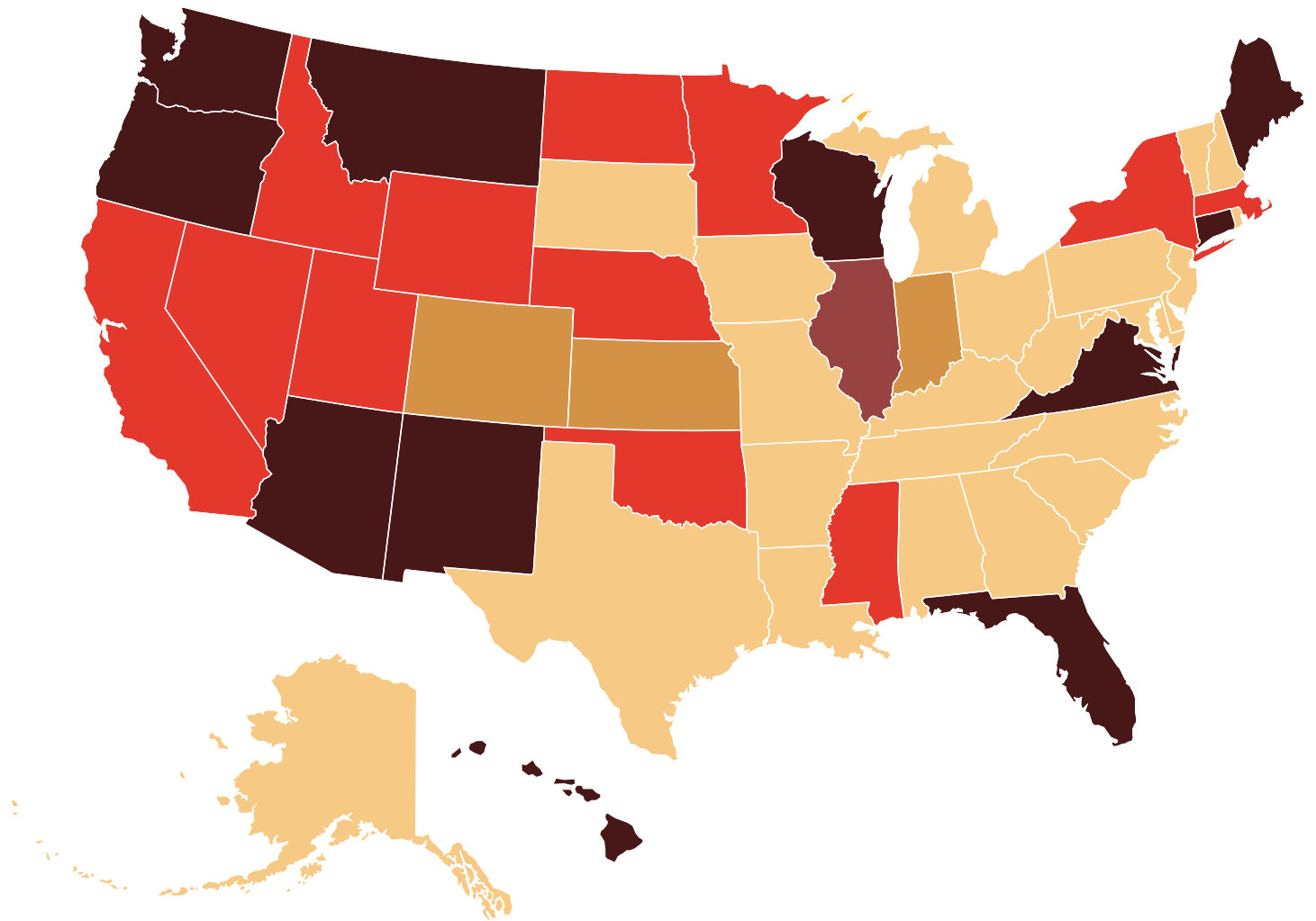
Less than half of the states surveyed (12 out of 28, or 43 percent) reported that Native American education curriculum is required to be taught at some or all grade levels in the K-12 public school system. Several states currently provide curricula to meet this requirement: Colorado, Oregon, Hawaii, Montana, Idaho, Connecticut, Wisconsin, and North Dakota. Other states such as California and New Mexico are in the process of developing curricula for statewide use.

***A majority of states surveyed reported Native American education was included in their content standards, but less than half of the states require it to be taught in K-12 schools.***

<sup>7</sup>Reclaiming Native Truth (2018). Research Findings: Compilation of All Research. Echo Hawk Consulting & First Nations Development Institute, June 2018, Accessed on September 15, 2019 at: <https://illuminatives.org/reclaiming-native-truth/>.

Most states do not provide or mandate a specific curriculum – in any subject matter – because states either choose to establish content standards and leave it to schools to decide how to reach those standards or limit the role of the state in support of local control of the curriculum. Many states simply do not have the capacity to develop materials in a comprehensive manner. For example, two-thirds of states responding to the survey stated they receive no funding to implement Native American education curricula. **Figure 2** summarizes the responses of states on whether or not they have Native American education content and/or whether the state requires Native American curricula to be taught in the K-12 system.

**Figure 2. Native American Education Standards and Curriculum**



**Native Education (N.E.) Standards & Curriculum**

- State includes N.E. content in standards AND requires N.E. curriculum to be taught in K-12 system.
- Not included in Landscape Analysis or had survey response of “not sure”
- State includes N.E. content in standards
- State does not include N.E. content in standards AND does not require N.E. curriculum to be taught in K-12 system
- State requires N.E. to be taught in K-12 system

## COLLABORATION WITH TRIBAL NATIONS

According to the key informant survey, all but one state that developed or is developing a Native American curriculum consulted tribal governments and/or Native American education experts. Including the expert knowledge of tribal nations is essential to developing accurate and culturally responsive Native American education. All K-12 students need to understand that tribal nations are still present in this country, each with its own distinct histories, cultures, languages, identities, and perspectives.

### ***Essential Understandings***

Several states have worked with tribal nations to develop essential understandings, which are key concepts that are agreed upon by tribal nations in the state to help educators understand and frame Native American education topics.

An example of an essential understanding comes from North Dakota: “Native people continue to contribute to all levels of society from local to global in diverse fields including medicine, science, government, education, economics, art, music, and many more.”

Another example of an essential understanding is from Montana: “Just as there is great diversity among tribal nations, there is great diversity among individual American Indians as identify is developed, defined, and redefined by entities, organizations, and people. There is no generic American Indian.”

Sixteen of the states (57 percent) that were surveyed reported having some version of an essential understandings resource. These states include Maine, Oregon, Arizona and Wisconsin, among others. These types of educator resources are important because they provide a framework, vetted by tribal nations and/or other entities, from which to build teaching practices.

***Essential understandings were present in just over half of states surveyed.***

**Table 2** summarizes the extent to which tribal governments are engaged in advocacy and support for Native American education and curriculum in each state. Responses are self-referential; each state assessed the engagement from their own perspective.

**Table 2: Extent of Tribal Government Engagement in Advocacy and Support for Native Education and Curriculum by State Respondents**

STATE	A HIGH AMOUNT	A MODERATE AMOUNT	A SMALL AMOUNT	NOT AT ALL	I DON'T KNOW
Arizona			X		
California					X
Colorado	X				
Connecticut			X		
Florida					X
Hawaii	X				
Idaho	X				
Illinois (Chicago)				X	
Indiana			X		
Kansas					X
Louisiana			X		
Maine		X			
Massachusetts					X
Minnesota		X			
Mississippi					X
Montana		X			
Nebraska		X			
Nevada		X			
New Mexico		X			
New York			X		
North Dakota	X				
Oklahoma		X			
Oregon		X			
Utah				X	
Virginia		X			
Washington		X			
Wisconsin					X
Wyoming	X				

## NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY STATES

**Table 3** illustrates the summary of scores for each state, developed from their responses to the questions in the survey. The goal was to provide a way to organize the information about states and group states in similar places in their implementation and support of Native American education. This information may be helpful to advocates wondering which states provide “opportunities” to advance Native American education for all K-12 students.

The description of how these scores were calculated was included in the methodology section. States with scores of 9-12 have already implemented many components to support Native American education. States that scored 6-8 have implemented some components but still have work to do. States that scored 0-5 have made little or no progress towards implementing a Native American education curriculum. This grouping of states is solely a method of organizing states that are in similar places when it comes to implementation and support opportunities. The ranking was based on their responses to our questions about implementation and the quality of the education or effort was not assessed. After a review of the information in Table 3, the project team decided to develop state profiles about one state in each of the three groups to better understand opportunities at every level to advocate and implement policy for Native American education for all K-12 students.

**Table 3: Native American Education Opportunity States by Group Score**

<b>SCORE: 9-12</b> Higher level of implementation	<b>SCORE: 6-8</b> Medium level of implementation	<b>SCORE: 0-5</b> Lower level of implementation
Hawaii	Colorado	California
Montana	Connecticut	Illinois (Chicago)
Oregon	Nevada	Nebraska
Idaho	Virginia	Utah
North Dakota	Wyoming	New York
Washington	New Mexico	Massachusetts
Oklahoma	Arizona	Indiana
Wisconsin	Florida	Kansas
	Maine	Louisiana
	Minnesota	Mississippi

*Scoring: Higher scores reflect a higher level of implementation of components to support Native American education for all K-12 students (see narrative for description of scores)*

## NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION STATE LAWS AND POLICIES

The key informant survey and interviews revealed a wide set of state laws and policies for authorizing and implementing Native American education. A scan of the current state laws and policies related to Native American education reveals the rich set of strategies that states employ to advance Native American education in public schools. These include the following types of laws and policies, with one state example in parentheses:

- **State legislation to establish Native American education advisory councils**, mandating collaboration between educators and tribal nations to ensure the public education system meets the needs and builds on the strengths of Native American students (Oklahoma: <https://sde.ok.gov/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/HB2929.pdf>);
- **State legislation that specifically empowers the state education agency** to develop Native American education curriculum, provide training and evaluation, and certify Native American education language instructors (North Dakota: <https://www.legis.nd.gov/cencode/t15-1c21.pdf>);
- **State legislation and a constitutional mandate** that encourages every citizen to learn about Native Americans and for the state education agency and local school districts to work with tribal nations in the state when delivering Native American education for all students (Montana: <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/20/1/20-1-501.htm>);
- **State legislation that requires** all public school districts and teacher education programs to provide instruction on the state's tribal nations (Wisconsin: <https://dpi.wi.gov/amind/state-statues>);
- **State constitution language that provides for a program** consisting of language, culture and history in the public schools and encourages community expertise in its development (Hawaii: <http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/StudentLearning/HawaiianEducation/Pages/Hawaiian-studies-program-interview.aspx>);
- **State education agency policy to develop culturally inclusive guidelines** to assist local school districts' development of quality Native American education curriculum (Arizona: <https://cms.azed.gov/home/GetDocumentFile?id=58dc0011130c01500d4b0a1>);
- **State education policy that Native American education be included in content standards**, often embedded in history or social studies content areas (various states).

Advancing Native American education through advocacy is a priority for numerous stakeholders. Political context, current events, fiscal conditions, and community pressures all play a role in the likelihood of a legislative bill becoming law. Similarly, how Native American education laws and policies are developed and brought into reality vary from state to state.



**Political context, current events, fiscal conditions, and community pressures all play a role in the likelihood of a legislative bill becoming law.**

The states shared **common strategies for advancing Native American education**. Examples include the following:

- **Native American legislative caucus.** In some states, a group of legislators work together to advance issues related to Native Americans and can provide the core of a bipartisan alliance to create momentum for Native American education. Native American legislative caucuses in Oregon and Montana continue to be instrumental in advancing Native American education agendas.
- **Powerful champion(s).** Powerful, connected leaders with the support of many tribal nations in the state can dedicate themselves to the persuasion and relentless advocacy needed for a bill or policy to pass. In Washington, this strategy was critical to the passage of the *Since Time Immemorial Act* (HB 1495).
- **Committed tribal and community advocates.** Many states have Native organizations and associations that work on a variety of issues, often directly related to Native American education. Tribal nations and community members can join together to put pressure on the legislature or state education agency to strengthen commitments to implement Native American education, as happened in New Mexico and Oregon. In Montana, it took a lawsuit initiated by schools, supported by Native American education advocates, to force the legislature to fund the implementation of State Law MCA 20-1-501, known as *Indian Education for All* (IEFA).

When determining the best strategy to pursue, the states mentioned **key stakeholders** to include in the discussion, and some examples are listed below:

- Native American state legislators and other state legislative allies
- Governor's Offices
- Offices of Indian Affairs or similarly titled offices in the state
- Tribal leaders and tribal education departments
- Native American students and families and local school boards
- State education agencies, including the Superintendent's office, curriculum staff (often history/social studies), Title I staff, equity staff or other staff responsible for ensuring all students have access to a quality education.



## STATE PROFILES

The project team selected three states for in-depth state profiles to gather more information on their efforts to implement state-wide Native American education for all students: **Oregon, Minnesota, and Nebraska**. The state profiles were developed after interviewing Native American education directors in each state.

### **MINNESOTA: ADVANCING NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION THROUGH COLLABORATION WITH TRIBAL NATIONS**

Minnesota is home to 11 federally recognized tribal nations. More than 23,145 Native American students attend school in the state, representing approximately 2.7 percent of student enrollment. Minnesota State Statute 120B.021 requires that the Commissioner of Education at the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) “must include the contributions of Minnesota American Indian tribal nations and communities as related to the academic standards during the review and revision of the required academic standards.”



Despite this mandate, Dr. Jane Harstad, Director of Indian Education at MDE, wishes that there were more focus on Native American education in the state. At this time, there are no requirements that Native American education be taught, the state has yet to develop essential understandings, and there is a lack of access to curriculum for educators. The MDE is unable by state law to write or mandate curriculum in any content area, but the lack of educator knowledge about tribal nations, and the importance of consulting tribal nations, means that it is particularly challenging to get good Native American education teaching resources to schools in Minnesota.

Dr. Harstad and her team of two staff at the MDE Office of Indian Education are working on several fronts to advance Native American education in the state:

- At the Office of Indian Education, staff have worked with the University of St. Catherine to develop a list of Native American-authored reading sources for educators to incorporate into coursework that is aligned with K-12 state standards for English, Language Arts, and Social Studies.
- The Tribal Nations Education Committee (the Committee), established by State Statute 124D.73, is a committee consisting of representatives from each of the 11 tribal nations plus two metro-area representatives. MDE is directed to consult with the Committee on all matters related to educating Native students in the state.
- Dr. Harstad is working with a Curriculum Subcommittee of the Tribal Nations Education Committee to create a repository of existing curriculum, to apply for grants to help develop curriculum, and to have Native American teaching materials vetted by schools and then published. The Committee receives no public funding, however, and Committee members all have full-time jobs, so progress can be slow due to a lack of capacity

The Committee recently passed resolutions with the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council to endorse this effort. The Prairie Island Indian Community has agreed to be the fiscal agent to help build capacity to move the work forward. In addition, some tribal nations are offering staff time to assist with grant writing.

- More recently, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz signed Executive Order 19-24 requiring each state department to implement tribal consultation policies to guide their work and interaction with Minnesota tribal nations. MDE just finalized its own consultation policy, which all state agencies must do under EO 19-24. Dr. Harstad is hopeful this will bring renewed focus and intention to the government-to-government relationship with tribal nations concerning Native American education in the state.
- The Office of Indian Education has also organized the Indigenous Education Task Force in consultation with tribal nations at the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to bring a shared awareness of Native American education (with all its complexities) to all MDE staff and employees. From this shared understanding, strategic planning will take place in the fall of 2019 to begin to think about and act in more effective and targeted ways regarding Native students and the teaching of Native American education content in the state.

Dr. Harstad had these words of wisdom for states seeking to advance Native American education:

- **Listen more.** “We need to listen more – to the tribal nations, the children, their families, and to everyone who wants all students to learn about the history and contemporary lives of Minnesota tribal nations. The state’s renewed focus on consultation is encouraging, but it will only affect real change if people listen to one another and institutions respond.”

- **Stay focused.** “Minnesota is not where it needs to be in terms of bringing Indian education to all students. We need to be sure there are reality checks in place: which schools are seeing more success in their classrooms? Which schools still struggle? What can we do to eliminate barriers and share success?”
- **Don’t give up.** “Keep your passion for this work. Surround yourself with people who are committed to this work. All of us are needed to make the difference.”

## MINNESOTA

Federally recognized tribal nations	11
Native American student K-12 enrollment in public schools	23,145 Native American students in the state out of 862,971 = 2.68 percent Native American state population This is a state count (self-identification) rather than a federal count. In addition, some Native American students were NOT reported due to a data reporting error.
State Education Agency Indian Education staffing	3.0 FTE
State Education Agency funding allocated by the state	\$16,000.00 for FY2020. <sup>i</sup>
Status of advisory councils	The Tribal Nations Education Committee (TNEC). The TNEC has one representative from each of the 11 Nations/communities, as well as one representative for Minneapolis/St. Paul and one for the Duluth area. In addition, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (six of the Anishinaabe reservations as a group) also has a representative. The TNEC has monthly meetings, bi-monthly face-to-face meetings, and bi-monthly teleconferences. Each nation or community hosts the face-to-face meetings, and the Minnesota Department of Education facilitates the teleconferences.

<sup>i</sup> During the initial survey, no funding was reported but this amount was shared in the in-depth interview.

## NEBRASKA – TRIBAL NATIONS AND KEY ALLIES COMING TOGETHER TO FILL THE GAP

Currently, the position of Indian Education Director at the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is vacant. Colette Yellow Robe, Ph.D., who formerly served as a Native American and Diversity Education Consultant at NDE, states that various Native American education organizations and advocates have risen in support of Native American Education for All efforts in the state during this vacancy, which include the following:



- The state of Nebraska has Educational Service Units (ESU) in place which operate between the NDE and the local school districts. ESU #1 has contracted with a former Superintendent to assist with the four reservation public schools in Northeast Nebraska. The extent of that contract is unknown at this time.
- NDE is currently in the process of rewriting the state’s social studies standards. Native American stakeholders have been included in this important process to help ensure that the experience of the state’s Native peoples is included.
- In addition, tribal nations in the state are also stepping into the curriculum development arena for their local area schools. The Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska is developing new education material reconnecting them to their tribal culture in Wisconsin and all four tribal nations are actively working to integrate their Indigenous languages into the schools that serve their students.
- Grassroots efforts are being led, in part, by the newly reformed Nebraska Indian Education Association, which is currently awaiting potential start-up funds from various groups and tribal nations. In addition, the state’s Title VI organizations, the Nebraska Inter-Tribal Coalition, the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs, University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Education and others are advocating for Native American education efforts. Other key advocates include various tribal council members and/or tribal staff.
- Currently, Governor Pete Ricketts convenes a Commission on Indian Affairs with an office at the State Capitol. In addition, the four federally recognized tribal nations in Nebraska developed an Inter-Tribal Coalition, which meets on a quarterly basis throughout the year to discuss various topics related to government-to-government relationships in the state.

These efforts are potentially leading to a more centralized, coordinated effort in Nebraska, which will help to avoid competing ideas or duplicating efforts. Improved communication infrastructure for various organizations and tribal nations may improve coordination and advance a forward movement. This includes an ability to provide infrastructure to empower the tribal nations in Nebraska. In addition, more control in the area can potentially be handed off to tribal nations in the state or at least conducted with greater collaboration.

Dr. Yellow Robe advised that when possible, tribal nations should write curriculum for schools to use and take steps to ensure teachers receive training in using any new materials.

## NEBRASKA

Federally recognized tribal nations	6
Native American student K-12 enrollment in public schools	4,733 Native American students, comprising roughly 1.3 percent of the total student population
State Education Agency Indian Education staffing	None; contracting with a consultant
State Education Agency funding allocated by the state	None
Status of advisory councils	None

## OREGON – BUILDING ON MOMENTUM

Six years ago, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) knew they had a problem with Native American student achievement. “Through no fault of their own, our children were winning all the wrong races,” said April Campbell, Director of Indian Education. One of the challenges to bringing attention to the need for more resources for Native American education was a lack of data to verify what many already knew – that students who were enrolled members of tribal nations were doing more poorly than other students. State efforts include the following:



- The tribal nations rallied together and contracted with the Chalkboard Project, a Portland, Oregon organization, to collect student data from seven of the nine federally recognized tribal governments in Oregon, which it then compared with ODE student data to get a more accurate picture of how Native American youth were performing in the public school systems, which they then used to compile a report.
- Advocates used the report to inform not just ODE but also key state legislators, resulting in state funding for ODE’s first full-time Director of Indian Education. The first project the new director undertook was to update an existing, 30-year-old ODE plan for Native American student achievement by forming an American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Student Success Advisory Committee and taking a draft of the plan to the tribal nations in Oregon for input and support.
- In 2017, a coalition consisting of all nine tribal nations, the Oregon Indian Education Association, Oregon Education Association, the Confederation of School Administrators and several nonprofit organizations came together to push for state funding to bring Native American curriculum into classrooms across the state. Senate Bill 13 unanimously passed that year, directing ODE to work with tribal nations to: (1) develop a curriculum relating to the Native American experience in Oregon and make the curriculum available to school districts; and (2) provide professional development to teachers and administrators relating to the curriculum. This law is resulting in the creation and adoption of the Essential Understandings of Native Americans in Oregon and curriculum for grades four, eight, and 10. Furthermore, ODE contracted with Education Northwest to develop lesson plans to help meet the requirements of the new law. Senate Bill 13 was later called “Tribal History/Shared History.”

Indian Education Director Campbell reflects that ODE’s approach to hiring the first staff person was key to establishing and then building on the momentum in Oregon. ODE invited outside partners to help develop the job description and participate in the hiring process. This resulted in ODE hiring someone who had worked with the tribal nations, knew the tribal education directors, and had a trusting relationship through which to begin this new effort in Native American education.

Campbell had these words of wisdom for states seeking to advance Native American education:

- **Honor the government-to-government relationship.** All state agencies, not just ODE, have an obligation to work with tribal nations in all areas. Having a government-to-government relationship allows the state agency to reach out and to build and act upon a solid framework of law, policy, and practice, thus recognizing and honoring tribal sovereignty.
- **Provide professional development to state education agency leadership.** Viewing Native American education through an equity, diversity, and inclusion lens may fall short. While there is a component of that to the work, there is also an obligation to building relationships with tribal nations and developing meaningful government-to-government efforts. It can take time for an agency to really understand this obligation, and to build its capacity to honor it through the way the work is done.
- **Systemize it.** ODE has a Tribal Communication and Consultation Policy, which explains what consultation entails for Oregon and includes protocols on how to consult with fidelity. Part of the Office of Indian Education at ODE is to train and support its more than 500 staff to be aware of and implement the policy. If a state can incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and doing in its work, hopefully these efforts will affect districts and schools, and ultimately have a direct, positive impact on Native American students.
- **Provide adequate resources.** It is important to have staff and funding at the state agency dedicated to moving the work forward. In the past five years, Oregon has seen movement in graduation rates (an increase of 11 percent) for Native American students. This may correlate with the ODE’s decision to hire staff and provide resources over the past six years specifically for Native American education. More resources often lead to greater impact.

## OREGON

Federally recognized tribal nations	9
Native American student K-12 enrollment in public schools	7,280 Native American students, representing approximately 1.3 percent of the total student population
State Education Agency Indian Education staffing	Currently 2.0 FTE and 2 summer interns and by September 2020 will have 4.0 FTE and 2 interns
State Education Agency funding allocated by the state	A little over \$5 million in the biennium
Status of advisory councils	American Indian/Alaska Native Student Success Advisory Council is convened by ODE’s Office of Indian Education and meets bi-monthly (every other month).





## CONCLUSION

This report is an analysis of the landscape of current state efforts to bring high-quality Native American educational content into all K-12 classrooms across the United States. Although a great deal of work is happening across the country to bring accurate, culturally responsive, tribally specific, and contemporary content about Native Americans into mainstream education systems, much work remains to be done.

The **key findings** of the report are as follows:

- Almost 90 percent of states surveyed said they have **current efforts underway to improve the quality of and access** to Native American education curriculum;
- A majority of the states surveyed indicated that **Native American education is included in their content standards**, but far fewer states *require* Native American education curriculum to be taught in public schools;
- Less than half of the states surveyed reported that **Native American education curricula is required** in their state and that is **specific to tribal nations** in their state;
- Barriers to providing Native American education content in classrooms include the lack of: (a) **access to curricula**; (b) adequate **funding and state support** for staff, technical assistance, professional development and evaluation; and (c) **policies to expand Native American curriculum** beyond social studies/history subject areas; and

- Current avenues for advancing adoption of Native American curricula include state legislation mandating **collaboration between state education agencies and tribal nations**, state legislation empowering or requiring state education agencies to **develop curriculum**, and state education agency policy to develop **culturally responsive guidelines** for local districts.

Throughout most of the nation's history, Native American curricula has been nonexistent or authored by non-Native Americans and plagued with serious inaccuracies, negative stereotypes, and toxic misconceptions. Even though most states report current efforts to improve the quality of and access to Native American curricula, it is likely that much of the existing curricula that was not developed in partnership with the tribal nations in these states is inaccurate and further promotes these stereotypes and misconceptions. The results of this landscape analysis indicate that much more work needs to be done.

The education system is a powerful and primary driver of the invisibility and false narratives about Native peoples that dominate the American consciousness. Public opinion vacillates between various notions<sup>8</sup> and some think that Native peoples are relics of the past and no longer exist. Others romanticize a monolithic Native American experience and some Americans believe that all tribal citizens live in poverty and/or all have vast resources and money due to casino revenue. The erasure of Native peoples and the false narratives perpetuated by K-12 education harm Native American students' identity development and deprive all students of the right to learn about and understand the vital, unique, and ongoing contributions of this country's original inhabitants.

***Even though most states report current efforts to improve the quality of and access to Native American curricula, it is likely that much of the existing curricula that was not developed in partnership with the tribal nations in these states is inaccurate and further promotes these stereotypes and misconceptions.***

To counter and change these narratives in a way that presents the perseverance, intelligence, and contributions of Native peoples requires the development and implementation of accurate and authentic curricular and content resources authored by or in close consultation with Native peoples and tribal nations. Resources include lesson plans, supplementary materials, accurate texts, and other information. These resources are invaluable to educators whose own educational journeys featured little mention of Native peoples.

<sup>8</sup>Reclaiming Native Truth(2018). Research Findings: Compilation of All Research. First Nations Development Institute & Echo Hawk Consulting, June 2018. Accessed on September 15, 2019 at: <https://illuminatives.org/reclaiming-native-truth/>.

Quality educator materials developed with tribal consultation contain concepts that tribal nations know of, approve of, and wish to share with the general public. When a curriculum is developed in collaboration with tribal nation(s), the content usually delves more deeply and profoundly into information and knowledge related to specific histories, locations, languages, and ways of knowing. Native American curricula endorsed by local tribal nations also reinforces tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

Education about Native Americans across all subjects and areas of learning is good for all students. Native peoples, like other populations in the United States, are integral to the history of this country and the contemporary fabric of today's American society. All students benefit from diverse perspectives and greater understanding in this ever-changing and dynamic society. Native people's knowledge, skills, talents, resilience, and lived experiences are vital to the holistic education of America's children and ensuring all children are equipped and prepared for the future.

## **A CALL TO ACTION**

The results of the landscape analysis detailed in this report indicate that now is an ideal time for tribal nations, tribal citizens, and other stakeholders to organize and work alongside state decision-makers to fund, develop, and implement Native American curriculum efforts. With less than half of states having requirements in place for Native American education curricula, and with most reporting that efforts to improve curricula are underway, an opportunity exists for state decision-makers and legislators to build relationships with local tribal nations and engage with tribal leaders on strategies towards quality Native American education to benefit all students. The results also indicate that now is an opportune time for tribal nations, tribal citizens, and other stakeholders to work alongside their state legislatures to mandate that quality Native American education curriculum be taught in public schools.

***Now is an opportune time for tribal nations, tribal citizens, and other stakeholders to work alongside their state legislatures to mandate that quality Native American education curriculum be taught in public schools.***

An opportunity also exists for philanthropy to play a major role in creating meaningful change in this arena. Increased philanthropic investment in local, state, and national *Native American Education for All* efforts is crucial to actualizing narrative change in K-12 education.

From this analysis and work on this issue, advocates should consider the following key steps:

- **Understand the current status of Native American education efforts in your state**
  - Does your state require Native American curricula in K-12 schools for all students?
  - Has your state adopted stand-alone Native American education standards?
  - Does your state provide any funding to implement Native American curricula?
  - Has your tribal nation collaborated with tribal nations within the state or Native American education experts to develop Native American curricula?
  - Does your state provide opportunities for professional development for teachers on Native American education?
- **Mobilize support through coalition building in your state**
  - Meet with tribal leaders, Native American parents and Native American elders to understand the potential for education about tribal nations in your state and find allies;
  - Meet with state policymakers, private and public organizations, local colleges and universities, and any regional or national organizations that can be helpful, such as the National Indian Education Association or the National Congress of American Indians; and
  - Develop a plan to advance Native American education in your state, which may include meeting with state education agency officials, legislators, sending letters of support, and convening stakeholders.
- **Develop a Native American curriculum for your state**
  - Convene stakeholders including tribal representatives, education experts, and other stakeholders to develop standards, content, and/or curricula;
  - Ensure that the curriculum includes information about the tribal nations in the state;
  - Work closely with your state education agency and other stakeholders throughout the process; and
  - Bring foundations and individual donors into the circle to support curriculum development and advocacy efforts.

An appendix is included with examples of curricula and other educational resources, legislation, policies, and talking points for advocates and policymakers to help advance Native American education efforts in their state.

This report is intended to serve as a scan of the landscape of current Native American education efforts to inform tribal governments, state education agencies, Native American education advocates, tribal colleges and state universities, foundations, and policymakers who are interested in or who are currently working to advance quality K-12 education about Native peoples at the national level, in their tribal nation, state, and/or local community.

***NCAI, NIEA, IllumiNative, the Wend Collective, and other Native organizations are working together to use this report as a catalyst to launch a new national campaign to advance efforts nationwide for Native American Education for All. Together, we look forward to discussing and working shoulder to shoulder with longtime Native American education advocates, students, parents and allies to activate these finding to help transform the K-12 education system into one that is inclusive and respectful of Native peoples' histories, cultures, contributions and important roles in contemporary U.S. society.***

***We hope you will join this effort.***



# APPENDIX:

## TOOL KIT – STATE NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION RESOURCES

The purpose of this appendix is to provide a tool kit of resources for those working towards state support and implementation of Native American education curricula. The appendix includes resources on the following key steps to helping advocate for Native American education for all K-12 students in your state:

### Understand the Current Status of Native American Education Efforts in Your State

- Assess Current Efforts
- Learn about Existing State Native American Education Laws and Policy

### Mobilize Support through Coalition Building in Your State

- Identify Stakeholders
- Meet with State Legislators
- Talking Points
- Sample Letter of Support

### Develop a Native American Curriculum for Your State

- State Education Curriculum Resources
- Convene to Develop the Curriculum

## **UNDERSTAND THE CURRENT STATUS OF NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION EFFORTS IN YOUR STATE**

The first step in mobilizing efforts to implement Native American education for all K-12 students is to understand the background and current status of these efforts in your state. The landscape analysis report may help you find some initial information about your state efforts to date.

In order to mandate and fund Native American education laws and policies, you will need to work with members of your state legislature. The primary responsibility of any state legislature is to design, draft, and vote on bills and laws to govern each state.

This section of the appendix will assist you in understanding the process for developing government policy and how you can work as part of a local, regional, tribal, statewide or national network to achieve your objective. Each state is at different places in their implementation efforts. Therefore, it is important to recognize that not all of the information included is applicable to everyone. Some states may already have some type of standards related to Native American communities; others may have standards but do not offer teachers in their state professional development opportunities to teach the curriculum. You will want to tailor these resources to the status of Native American curriculum in your state.

### ***Assess Current Efforts***

Advancing Native American education through advocacy should include numerous stakeholders. Political context, current events, fiscal conditions, and community pressures all play a role in the likelihood of a legislative bill passing into law. Therefore, it is important to understand the political context you are about to enter.

To begin, you will need to complete an assessment of your state's current efforts in teaching Native American K-12 curricula. The landscape analysis found that states that were successful in the implementation of Native American curriculum accomplished the following milestones:

- Passed state legislation requiring Native American curriculum be taught in each grade from Kindergarten to 12th grade;
- Created stand-alone Native American education standards;
- Developed curriculum specific to tribal nations within the state;
- Funded Native American curriculum efforts at \$100,000 or more; and
- Consulted and involved tribal governments in their state throughout the entire process.

Below are some questions that will help you determine the **status of your state's current efforts**. You are encouraged to reach out to your state's Department of Education.

- Does your state **require** Native American education curriculum be taught in the K-12 system?
- Has your state **adopted** stand-alone Native American education standards?
- Does your state **receive** any funding to implement the Native American education curricula?
- Do tribal nations in your state **provide** funds specifically in support of Native American education?
- Are tribal governments and/or Native American education experts **consulted** or involved in the development of curriculum?
- Does your state provide **opportunities** for professional development in Native American education to teachers?

The following page is a worksheet you can use to help you organize information and contacts that you have gathered.



# ADVOCACY WORKSHEET

## *Understanding the Issue and Seeking Background Information*

Does your state require Native American curriculum be taught in the K-12 systems?	
Has your state adopted stand-alone Native American education standards?	
Does your state receive any dedicated funding to implement Native American curricula?	
Do tribal nations in your state provide funds specifically in support of Native American education?	
Are tribal governments and/or Native American education experts consulted or involved in the development of curriculum?	
Does your state provide opportunities for professional development in Native American education to teachers?	

<b>States Department of Education Contact information</b> (If possible you will want to contact the state's Office of Indian Education):
Name:
Title:
Email:

<b>States Department of Education Contact information</b> (If possible you will want to contact the state's Office of Indian Education):
Name:
Title:
Email:

## LEARN ABOUT EXISTING STATE NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION LAWS AND POLICY

Examples of state laws and policies on Native American education are included below and more information can be viewed by going to each website listed.

STATE NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION LAWS AND POLICIES	
Oklahoma	<p><b>State legislation</b> to establish Native American education advisory councils, stipulating collaboration between educators and tribal nations to ensure the public education system meets the needs of Native American students</p> <p><a href="https://sde.ok.gov/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/HB2929.pdf">https://sde.ok.gov/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/HB2929.pdf</a></p>
North Dakota	<p><b>State legislation</b> that specifically empowers the state education agency to develop Native American education curriculum, to provide training and evaluation, and to certify Native American education language instructors</p> <p><a href="https://www.legis.nd.gov/cencode/t15-1c21.pdf">https://www.legis.nd.gov/cencode/t15-1c21.pdf</a></p>
Montana	<p><b>State legislation</b> and a constitutional mandate that encourages every citizen to learn about Native Americans and for the state education agency and local school districts to work with state tribal nations when delivering Native American education for all students.</p> <p><a href="https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/20/1/20-1-501.htm">https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/20/1/20-1-501.htm</a></p>
Wisconsin	<p><b>State legislation</b> that requires all public school districts and teacher education programs to provide instruction on the state's tribal nations</p> <p><a href="https://dpi.wi.gov/amind/state-statues">https://dpi.wi.gov/amind/state-statues</a></p>
Hawaii	<p><b>State constitution language:</b> Hawaii's state constitution states, "The State shall provide for a Hawaiian education program consisting of language, culture and history in the public schools."</p> <p><a href="http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/StudentLearning/HawaiianEducation/Pages/Hawaiian-studies-program-interview.aspx">http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/StudentLearning/HawaiianEducation/Pages/Hawaiian-studies-program-interview.aspx</a></p>
Arizona	<p><b>State education agency policy</b> to develop culturally inclusive guidelines to assist local school districts' development of quality Native American education curriculum</p> <p><a href="https://cms.azed.gov/home/GetDocumentFile?id=58dc0011130c01500d4b0a1">https://cms.azed.gov/home/GetDocumentFile?id=58dc0011130c01500d4b0a1</a></p>
Minnesota Wyoming	<p><b>State education policy</b> that Native American education be included in content standards, often embedded in history or social studies content areas</p> <p><a href="https://www.education.mn.gov/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&amp;dDocName=060289&amp;RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&amp;Rendition=primary">https://www.education.mn.gov/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&amp;dDocName=060289&amp;RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&amp;Rendition=primary</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.wyoleg.gov/2017/Enroll/HB0076.pdf">https://www.wyoleg.gov/2017/Enroll/HB0076.pdf</a></p>

## MOBILIZE SUPPORT THROUGH COALITION BUILDING IN YOUR STATE

A broad-based coalition or group can help accomplish more than one individual. Reaching a larger number of key legislators is easier when more individuals share the load. A community advocating for a common goal creates relationships and builds partnerships that will serve various purposes in the future. When building a coalition, gaining support from the tribal governments in the state is an important first step. Make sure to inquire about current advocacy and how you can best support current efforts.

### **Identify Stakeholders**

The groups/individuals listed below can be important supporters in advocating for Native American curriculum in your state:

<b>Tribal leaders in your state</b>	Tribal nations must be involved in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of any curriculum dealing with Native American history and culture.
<b>Native American parents</b>	Parent committees are a great asset in the creation and review of as well as advocacy for Native American curriculum.
<b>Native American elders</b>	Tribal nations hold elders in the highest respect. Elder committees are a strong resource for the creation and review of tribal-specific curriculum.
<b>State policymakers</b>	State legislators have the power to allocate public funding, require Native American curriculum be taught, and eliminate barriers to getting Native American curriculum in K-12 schools.
<b>Private and public organizations and affinity groups</b>	These organizations and groups can find or provide funding for gatherings, implementation, and advocacy. Having trusted organizations support community work such as this is extremely important.
<b>Local colleges and universities</b>	Colleges and universities can be a great resource in the review and implementation of Native American curriculum. Especially schools of education and teacher preparation programs.
<b>National organizations</b>	The National Indian Education Association and National Congress of American Indians.

## MEET WITH STATE LEGISLATORS

Whether you are communicating with your state legislators face-to-face, via email, or by phone, be persistent and professional. Keep the following in mind when making your appointments, meeting with your representative, and following up after your meeting:

- **Contact Your Representatives and Senators:** Do not contact politicians that do not represent you. In order to have broad coalition support, ask each member of the coalition to contact their own representative;
- **Make Appointments With Key Staff:** It is often difficult to meet directly with your legislator. You are also encouraged to meet with and get to know your legislators' staff since it is their job to report on your meeting to the legislator;
- **Be Concise And Ask For Something Specific:** Members of your state legislature have many responsibilities. You are more likely to have your message heard if you are brief and share how Native American curriculum is personally important to you and your community. Depending on the current status of Native American curriculum in your state, you will want to be specific in your request (i.e. require curriculum be taught, funding for curriculum implementation including professional development, etc.);
- **Keep Copies of Emails, Letters, and Notes for Future References:** It helps when you can reference specific quotes and points whenever issues come up in future meetings and discussions;
- **Follow-up and Stay in Touch:** Developing a relationship does not happen in one meeting; it requires persistence. Do not expect one phone call, email, or meeting to be enough; and
- **Be Sure to Say Thank You:** After a meeting, or when legislation is passed, make sure to recognize your representative. A handwritten thank you note goes a long way.

## TALKING POINTS

Tribal nations, state education agencies, Native American education advocates, tribal colleges and state universities, foundations, and policymakers who are interested in or who are currently working to advance quality Native American K-12 education at the national level, in their tribal nation, state, and/or in their local community must coordinate and effectively advocate for Native American education for all K-12 students in their state. The following talking points can help encourage discussions and action to advance Native American education at the local, state, and federal level.

### WHY Does Native American Education for All K-12 Students Matter?

- Most Americans do not have accurate information about the historical and contemporary lives of Native peoples in their state.
- A recent study found that people look to their K-12 education experience to provide them with good information about Native peoples, but they did not receive accurate information or no information at all when they attended school.
- This lack of awareness and knowledge of contemporary Native Americans leads to misguided school policies/practices, impaired relationships, racism, and discrimination.
- All students benefit from learning accurate information about Native Americans, including their history and special political status.

### Talking Points for Advocates when Talking with Decision-makers

- The ability for Native American students to see themselves represented in curriculum is critical to their overall educational engagement and their educational success.
- Our state and school districts should consider integrating and including Native American content and issues in their curricula, including treaty rights and tribal sovereignty. Native American curricula can help address persistent educational inequities in our communities and knowledge gaps for all students.
- There is a lack of understanding about tribal citizens and tribal governance in our state. Requiring these topics to be taught in our K-12 school system will help address this lack of knowledge and encourage our Native American students to be engaged and feel seen in our schools.
- It is important for individuals within our state to understand the rich cultures and contributions of our tribal nations. Requiring curriculum to be taught in our schools about the tribal nations within our state is a good first step in building this understanding.

## DEVELOP A NATIVE AMERICAN CURRICULUM FOR YOUR STATE

Including the expert knowledge of tribal nations and the Native American community is essential to developing accurate and culturally relevant Native American education. For this to occur, tribal nations within your state must be involved in the creation of curriculum. Including tribal nations in this process will ensure that accurate and appropriate information is being taught. This will also encourage schools to collaborate with tribal culture departments, language departments and other departments and programs.

**Some key terms are important in understanding the efforts of states to implement Native American education:**

**Academic standards** establish desired learning outcomes.

*Example: All students should know about diverse populations in their state.*

**Curriculum** provides instructional programming designed to help students reach those outcomes.

*Example: Washington State's Since Time Immemorial curriculum covers a wide range of issues regarding tribal sovereignty for K-12 students.*

**Content** includes educational materials that are used in classroom instruction.

*Example: Using Joy Harjo poems in English Language Arts highlights diversity and contemporary Native American perspectives in literature.*

## STATE EDUCATION CURRICULUM RESOURCES

Examples of quality Native American education curricula can be found on the state websites listed below. The majority of these links include access to state essential understandings and other important educator materials. These examples can serve as good reference points for similar efforts in other states or locations. However, as in all cases with curriculum development pertaining to Native peoples, tribal nations within each state should be consulted throughout curriculum development.

### NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION CURRICULUM STATE & NATIONAL RESOURCES

#### STATE RESOURCES

Colorado	<a href="https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/ccia/fourth-grade-ute-resource-guide">https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/ccia/fourth-grade-ute-resource-guide</a>
Connecticut	<a href="https://mohegan.nsn.us/docs/default-source/default-document-library/teacher_resource_guidec4b51267041660f2864eff0000f396b9.pdf?sfvrsn=0">https://mohegan.nsn.us/docs/default-source/default-document-library/teacher_resource_guidec4b51267041660f2864eff0000f396b9.pdf?sfvrsn=0</a>
Maine	<a href="https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/content/socialstudies/resources/mainenativestudies/resources">https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/content/socialstudies/resources/mainenativestudies/resources</a>
Montana	<a href="http://opi.mt.gov/Educators/Teaching-Learning/Indian-Education">http://opi.mt.gov/Educators/Teaching-Learning/Indian-Education</a>
North Dakota	<a href="https://www.nd.gov/dpi/students-parents/IndianEd/NAEUP/">https://www.nd.gov/dpi/students-parents/IndianEd/NAEUP/</a>
Oregon	<a href="https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/equity/NativeAmericanEducation/Pages/Indian-Education-Resources.aspx">https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/equity/NativeAmericanEducation/Pages/Indian-Education-Resources.aspx</a>
Washington	<a href="http://www.indian-ed.org/curriculum/">http://www.indian-ed.org/curriculum/</a>
Wisconsin	<a href="https://wisconsinfirstNations.org/">https://wisconsinfirstNations.org/</a>

#### NATIONAL RESOURCES

NMAI	<a href="https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/resources.cshtml">https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/resources.cshtml</a>
Bioneers	<a href="https://bioneers.org/programs/indigeneity/">https://bioneers.org/programs/indigeneity/</a>

## CONVENE TO DEVELOP THE CURRICULUM

Creating and implementing culturally rich Native American curriculum takes time. Gathering tribal leaders and local education experts together is a good way to start these efforts. Given the distinct and unique histories, languages, identities, and perspectives of tribal nations throughout the nation, educators, advocates and policymakers can ask the following questions when developing, reviewing or advocating for quality Native American education curriculum:

- To what extent does the content include contemporary contributions, portrayals, and contexts that help students understand that Native peoples continue to thrive and grow in this country?
- In what ways do the materials allow for multiple ways of learning, such as hands on activities, place based opportunities, public demonstrations of knowledge?
- To what extent are supporting texts written largely by tribal leaders or Native American content experts, such as culture bearers, elders, historians, authors, or artists?
- Do all materials provide proper citations and provide acknowledgment of tribal contributions? And is evidence provided that materials have been vetted, if necessary, by tribal experts?



## **THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR PARTNERING WITH LOCAL TRIBAL NATIONS IN TEACHING ABOUT TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY<sup>9</sup>**

The best way to ensure successful creation and implementation of any Native American curriculum is for all parties to build a long-term relationship between school(s) and the local tribal nations. This is a lengthy, gradual, and complex endeavor and cannot happen overnight. While you may be ready to embark on including perspectives in your state's curriculum, you must start with building partnerships between the school and tribal nations in your state. While building these partnerships may take some time, they will be critical to the success of your efforts to advocate for Native American education for all public school students in your state.

### **Tribal nations can play the following roles:**

1. Assist in planning lessons and/or units.
2. Write one-page background information for teachers to use.
3. Help adapt lessons to reflect local tribal history, traditions, and perspectives.
4. Arrange for tribal presentations for schools, districts, or other.
5. Arrange for classroom visits to the local tribal nations' cultural center, museums, or other appropriate destinations.
6. Invite school personnel to tribal cultural events.
7. Suggest sources and materials particular to local tribal nation(s) in the state.

### **To get started:**

1. Start early. Partnerships take time to build.
2. Contact your district's or state's Indian Education or Title Programs Director.
3. Make sure to regularly communicate and work with tribal partners.
4. Visit tribal websites to learn more about the tribal nations in your state. Follow up with meetings with each tribal nation.

<sup>9</sup> Adapted from Washington State Office of Indian Education

**NOTES:**

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**ALL STUDENTS ACROSS  
THE COUNTRY MUST HAVE  
ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY  
CURRICULA ABOUT TRIBAL  
NATIONS IN EACH STATE**

For more information,  
contact the National Congress of  
American Indians ([www.ncai.org](http://www.ncai.org))  
and the National Indian Education Association  
([www.niea.org](http://www.niea.org)).

