

NIEA National Cultural Standards For Education
Phase I

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Indian Education Association has a long-standing commitment to protecting the cultural and linguistic traditions of Native American students. Towards strengthening these outcomes, they are initiating the development of the National Native Cultural Standards for Education project. To provide background support for future phases of this project, we have gathered information and insights from existing cultural education standards projects. In particular, we examined the objectives and processes contributing to successes for the Akwesasne Freedom School, The Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools, The Montana Indian Education for All program, and the Native Hawaiian Guidelines for Culturally Healthy and Responsive Learning Environments.

From these case studies, as well as supplementary examples, we compiled objectives and processes commonly identified as valued and effective. Common valued objectives include understanding cultural identity; language revitalization; environmental learning; and preparedness for lifelong learning and leadership. Common effective processes include adaptable, not prescriptive standards; collaboration and sharing of resources; family and community engagement; and culturally appropriate, process, materials, and pedagogy.

Drawing from these common objectives and processes, the following suggestions may be useful to the NIEA for the National Native Cultural Standards for Education project:

- Avoid prescriptive standards keep the focus on guiding principles that can be appropriately adapted by communities and individuals
- Establish partnerships for support and resources
- Emphasize the role each community has in creating, interpreting and implementing these principles
- Maintain Indian ownership at all phases of the project.

We very are grateful to those who provided guidance and support during the project, and hope that the information and suggestions gathered will prove useful to the NIEA in future phases of the National Native Cultural Standards For Education project.

The following chart provides a visual outline of the common objectives and processes found in each case study, and how they connect to the recommendations offered.

Common Objectives			
Understanding cultural identity	Language revitalization	Environmental learning	Preparedness for lifelong learning and leadership
Common Processes			
Adaptable, Not Prescriptive Standards	Collaboration and Sharing of Resources	Family and Community Engagement	Culturally Appropriate Process, Materials and Pedagogy
↓	↓	Recommendations	
↓	↓	↓	↓
Avoid prescriptions, keep focus on guiding principles	Establish Partnerships for support and resources	Emphasize role each community has in adapting these principles and staying involved	Maintain Indian ownership at all phases of the project

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BACKGROUND ON NIEA

The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) was founded in 1969 and is the largest and oldest Indian education organization. The NIEA is committed to giving American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians a national voice as they strive for increased access to educational opportunity. In addition, through the establishment of various committees within NIEA, members work to ensure that Indian students and educators are represented in Washington, DC. Within this movement, the Association promises to work toward "increasing educational opportunities and resources for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students while protecting [their] cultural and linguistic tradition."

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The NIEA is in the preliminary stages of the development of National Native Cultural Standards for Education project. While the specifics of these proposed standards have yet to be determined, it is hoped that much can be learned from existing cultural education standards and the processes by which they were created. In our capacity as student researchers with the Nation Building class of the Harvard University Native American Program, we have gathered information and insights from these examples for the NIEA to consider as they move through further phases of this project.

Our Contribution

Phase 1:

- Collect information on existing native cultural education standards
- Interview individuals experienced in the process of creating these standards
- Synthesize this information to highlight common objectives and strategies, and outline considerations for further phases of this project

Further phases outlined by the NIEA:

Phase 2: Develop a draft of the National Native Cultural Standards

Phase 3: Approval and Dissemination

Phase 4: Develop Native Teacher Standards and Assessment

Our Approach

We carried out our research on native cultural education standards already in existence using websites and available documents. From these positive examples, we selected four to investigate more deeply, each representing a tribal, organizational or government run project. We interviewed representatives from: the Akwesasne Freedom School of the Mohawk Nation, the Alaska Native Knowledge Network, the Montana Indian Education for All project, and the Native Hawaiian Education Council. These groups were chosen because they are widely recognized as leaders in the field, and because they offer insights into the multiple levels at which this kind of project can be initiated.

In addition, we had the opportunity to attend the 2008 Montana Indian Education for All Best Practices Conference in order to better understand the creation, implementation and reception of the project. Through keynote speeches, breakout sessions and informal discussions and interviews, we were able to gather information regarding successful components of the project, as well as lessons they have learned along the way. We are

very grateful to the tribal members, teachers, and organizers who shared their experiences with us.

Throughout our conversations for this project, our interviewees have emphasized the need for research that focuses on the assets in Native American communities rather than the deficits. In recognition of these suggestions, we have focused our research on the abundant strengths and cultural wealth on which these communities are drawing to sustain and initiate positive learning experiences for their children. From these examples, we have gathered positive recommendations for the NIEA.

The Word "Standards": Differing Interpretations

When initiating conversations on the development of National Cultural Standards, it is important to make explicit what is meant by the word *standards*. In this research, we identified two distinct interpretations of the word currently used by governments, tribes, and organizations: (1) standardization and (2) guidelines.

(1) Standardization: The educational standards movement and the creation of No Child Left Behind has caused some educators to initially associate the phrase “National Cultural Standards” with *standardization*. Using this connotation, *standards* can mean specific criteria that teachers and educators are required to meet. Using this interpretation, failure to fulfill standards can result in unfavorable consequences, most often including financial sanctions.

(2) Guidelines: Some organizations, like the Alaska Native Knowledge Network (ANKN) have interpreted this word quite differently. The ANKN has developed their Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Students using the word *standards* to mean something close to *goals* or *guidelines*. Each of the Alaska standards were specifically written under the assumption that they will be adapted and molded to best fit each community’s needs. There are no consequences for not “meeting a standard,” rather, the standards symbolize a direction in which to aim curriculum.

After discussing this distinction with the NIEA, we have determined that this project employs a connotation of *standards* more closely representing the 2nd interpretation: goals or guidelines. In our research communications, we have found it helpful to clarify the intended interpretation of this word. For this reason, we recommend that the NIEA continue efforts to make this distinction and interpretation clear in future phases of this project.

VALUED EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Our research and interviews revealed that intended outcomes for culturally appropriate Native American education are multi-faceted. The following three goals were emphasized to differing degrees depending on the community in question:

- Revitalization and maintenance of identity, language, and culture
- Investment into community, tribal capacity, and sovereignty
- Support for academic achievement

Culturally appropriate education can support Native American students in developing a positive sense of self, making contributions to their communities, and successfully navigating the learning challenges of an increasing globalized world.

EXAMPLES: OBJECTIVES AND PROCESSES

The Mohawk Nation: Akwesasne Freedom School

The Mohawk Nation: Akwesasne Freedom School Objectives			
Understanding Cultural Identity	Language Revitalization	Environmental Learning	Preparedness for lifelong learning and leadership
Respect for all things	Immersion approach	Connecting to the rhythm of nature	Sound decision-makers for the future

Understanding cultural identity: respect for all things

At the Freedom School, students learn deep respect for all people and things from the example of their teachers. Their understanding of language and culture also teaches them to respect their families, community and selves.

Language revitalization: immersion approach

Learning the Mohawk language is a priority at the Freedom School, as it is the foundation for Mohawk cultural survival. They use a language immersion approach first initiated in 1985 as a strategy to reverse the assimilation process. Every effort is made to teach the language in a way that brings it to life, focusing on social activities and thematic applications. Students learn to make meaning with their spoken language before learning to read and write.

Environmental learning: connecting to the rhythm of nature

The Freedom School places emphasis on connecting students to their natural surroundings. The curriculum is rooted in the teachings of the traditional ceremonial Thanksgiving Address, which teaches gratitude to the earth. For instance, science skills are taught through studying things celebrated in the Thanksgiving Address including health and medicines, grasses, trees, animals, birds, water, wind, Thunder, Sun, the Moon, and the Earth. In addition, students celebrate the fifteen ceremonies of the Kanien'keha:ka Aohsera, or the Mohawk Ceremonial Year. This keeps them connected to the changes in their surroundings throughout the seasons. Awareness of the environment and the skills associated with understanding it are intended to help students be good decision makers for the future.

Preparedness for lifelong learning and leadership: sound decision-makers for the future

Children are seen as the greatest hope for the Mohawk Nation. The Freedom School is designed to prepare students to be future leaders, and make sound decisions that will

serve seven generations of unborn children. They are seen as future traditional leaders in their community and ambassadors for peace in the world.

The Mohawk Nation: Akwesasne Freedom School Process		
Collaboration and Sharing of Resources	Family and Community Engagement	Culturally Appropriate Process, Materials and Pedagogy
Friendship with Quaker community	Parent involvement	Mohawk-centered instruction

Collaboration and sharing of resources: friendship with Quaker community

The Freedom School places great importance on their autonomy. They avoid entering into agreements that might compromise their neo-traditional approach, but recognize the importance of building partnerships within and between communities. The parents at the school provide support, and community fundraisers bring additional resources. Outside of the community they have a partnership with group of Quakers who contribute and leverage funds. In addition, a small portion of their funds comes from foundations such as 4 Directions, a center for educational technology in Indian America.

Family and community engagement: parent involvement

The Freedom School also believes that consulting the community is one of the most important parts of having a culturally grounded school. A parent committee makes most of the important decisions for the school. This can be problematic when parents are referring to the western model of education that many of them received. However, the Freedom School offers opportunities for parents to learn from each other and share their belief in the importance of family and culture. Through this process, they are learning alongside their children.

Culturally appropriate process, materials and pedagogy

The Freedom School prioritizes the allocation of funds to those things that will help their students know more about themselves as Mohawks. For instance, they created a teacher-training program designed to “retrain” teachers to be more proficient in their language and cultural traditions. Four of these teachers are now working at the Freedom School using culturally appropriate methods.

Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools

Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools Objectives	
Understanding Cultural Identity	Preparedness for lifelong learning and leadership
Including the voices of Alaska Natives	A holistic approach to learning

Understanding cultural identity: including the voices of Alaska Natives

In the 1990's, standardization became the state and national solution to educational reform. Native Alaskans were disappointed to find that the standards movement was not moving in a direction that considered the needs of native people or included native representation in the decision making process.

Many Alaskans, especially elders, felt that the new state documents and the content they promoted did not make for a well-rounded education. As one Alaska Native Elder observed, "The schools are more concerned about preparing our children to make a living, than they are in preparing them to make a life for themselves." As a result of these discussions, the National Science Foundation developed and funded a 10-year project focusing on native ways of knowing and corresponding approaches to pedagogy. These funds then created the Rural Systemic Initiative, the organization responsible for the creation of the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools.

Preparedness for lifelong learning and leadership: a holistic approach to learning

It is believed that the state content standards map out a destination for students, outlining *what* is expected of them to graduate. The Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools were created as an overlay to the state standards and aim to promote a well-rounded education by focusing on the process of *HOW* they should be learning. The Alaska standards represent a more holistic approach to learning, by developing guidelines in five areas: students, educators, curriculum, schools and communities. An excerpt of the standards written specifically for students can be found in Appendix A.

Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools Process			
Adaptable, Not Prescriptive Standards	Collaboration and Sharing of Resources	Family and Community Engagement	Culturally Appropriate Process, Materials and Pedagogy
Honoring diversity	Utilizing concurrent indigenous research	Local ownership	A positive framework

Family and community engagement: local ownership

The Rural Systemic Initiative began its standards creation process by engaging local groups of education leaders in conversations about the changes they would like to see in their schools. They brought together elders and native educators to redefine what education could mean for their communities. To ensure that all diverse cultural regions in Alaska were accounted for, the Initiative established working groups in each region of the state.

While the government-imposed educational standards were created from the top and filtered down to schools, it was important that the Alaska Standards be constructed from the bottom-up. This process sought to increase public support and ownership of the standards and include the needs and goals of those implementing them.

Collaboration and sharing of resources: utilizing concurrent indigenous research

Although the whole process was bottom-up, the development of the Alaska Standards was also directed by concurrent research of indigenous cultural perspectives around the world. The Initiative also found it helpful to collaborate with other organizations that were going through similar processes. For instance, the language standards were created with support from the Native Hawaiian Council. A few years later, Hawaiian educators created their own standards using Alaska as a model.

Adaptable, not prescriptive standards: honoring diversity

Through this development process, it was determined that no uniform set of standards would adequately serve the differing populations in Alaska. As expected, the diversity across the state lead to some disagreements about educational goals. However, the committee found common principles and strategies. While this process was lengthy, our interviewee felt that it was one of the most valuable aspects of the standards creation because it brought together a diverse population to find common ground. It was felt that this practice of honoring diversity should continue throughout the implementation of the standards. For this reason, the standards were specifically written to be adaptive rather than prescriptive, so that each community can mold them to fit their unique needs.

Culturally appropriate process, materials, and pedagogy: positive framework

During the development phases of the project, frustration arose with the common research practice of focusing on inadequacies in the educational system. As a result, it was decided that the Alaska standards would be written in positive terms. Instead of focusing on what educators should NOT do, they outline what a culturally responsive student, school, or educator would look like.

Montana: Indian Education for All

Montana Indian Education for All Objectives		
Understanding Cultural Identity	Environmental Learning	Preparedness for lifelong learning and leadership
Institutional support	Place-based multiculturalism	Developing cooperative local and global citizens

Understanding cultural identity: institutional support

In 1973, Montana added a provision to its state constitution requiring that schools ensure the preservation of the cultural integrity of state tribes. In 1999, the Montana Legislature passed House Bill 528 into law, codifying this constitutional provision by requiring all students in public schools to learn about Montana Tribes. The formalization of Indian Education for All (IEFA) into law has been extremely helpful in garnering support and momentum for IEFA programs. A common question raised by the public has been, “Why *Indian* education for all? Why not German education or Italian education for all.” When the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) meets this resistance or hesitation to curriculum changes or projects, they can refer to the state law for support.

However, this constitutional process was not made a reality until 2005, when Governor Schweitzer and the legislature set aside \$4.4 million to implement a program to educate Montana’s students about its state’s first residents. OPI does not wish to underemphasize the importance of funding behind their recent progress of IEFA implementation. Even in schools and areas where the program was met with significant support, the necessary curriculum changes and specific program development would not have been possible without financial support.

Environmental learning: place-based multiculturalism

IEFA can be thought of as a program in place-based multiculturalism. Emphasis is placed on teaching and learning specifically about Montana. Students are taught the geography of Montana’s reservations, and the unique culture and identity of the 12 tribes

living in their state. They are also taught the history of Montana’s native people alongside the government’s perspective of state history.

Preparedness for lifelong learning and leadership: Developing cooperative local and global citizens

Through the process of educating Montana students about the history and culture of their local tribes, IEFA aims to foster informed and cooperative students and educators. It is hoped that the skills and experiences gained through exposing students to the diversity in their own state will better prepare them to work and live in our increasingly global society.

Montana Indian Education for All Process		
Adaptable, Not Prescriptive Standards	Collaboration and Sharing of Resources	Culturally Appropriate Process, Materials and Pedagogy
Essential Understandings	Partnerships with Tribes and organizations	Emphasizing teacher training and professional development

Adaptable, not prescriptive standards: The 7 essential understandings

The creation of the 7 Essential Understandings was a comparably quick process. The OPI solicited representatives from all of Montana’s 12 tribes to attend a idea-sharing conference. Over the course of two and a half days, the group sectioned and paired-off to determine how Montana students should learn about its local tribes. Each time the group reconvened, clear themes and goals emerged. By the end of the conference, the entire group agreed on what is now known as the 7 Essential Understandings.

While the numbering of the Understandings is not meant to indicate priority, a few different structural setups have been suggested to facilitate the understanding of these goals. For example, to make them more accessible, Hal Schmid from St. Ignatius Schools, divided the Understandings into four categories: Diversity, Culture, History, and Sovereignty. In many cases, this set-up has been well received by teachers in training.

Another perspective was offered by Dr. Iris Prettypaint, a member of the Blackfeet Tribe and keynote speaker at the 2008 Indian Education For All Best Practices Conference. She suggested that a more circular diagram of the Understandings, not employing a numbering or ordering system, might prevent readers from interpreting any hierarchy.

Collaboration and sharing of resources: partnerships with tribes and organizations

Perhaps the biggest obstacle for getting this project underway was the significant lack of curriculum resources and learning materials about Montana's Native Americans. Especially at the elementary level, most existing resources were extremely superficial in their knowledge about Indians, or worse, contained inaccurate information. Restocking their school's libraries with accurate sources, and supporting educators with new materials was a challenge that required a great deal of inter-organizational cooperation.

The cooperation and participation on behalf of the tribal leadership in Montana has been indispensable to this project. For instance, individual schools, such as Lewis and Clark Elementary, formed learning partnerships with local tribal elders to develop and implement new curriculum plans. In addition, the state of Montana initiated the Written Tribal History Project, for which they provided grants to the state's tribes toward the development of a written transcript of their history. This is a resource highly valued by educators dedicated to disseminating only the most accurate information. Similarly, the Western Heritage Center in Billings, Montana, developed the American Indian Tribal Histories Project, a project developing tribal histories through the compilation of dozens of interviews with tribal members. OPI understands how valuable these tribal partnerships are and realizes that continued trust and cooperation is contingent upon respectful use of these resources and tribal histories. They strongly recommend that the NIEA highly value and understand the importance of tribal cooperation in future stages of the National Standards Project.

In addition to local tribes, OPI partnered with numerous organizations and non-profits to help with the development of their curriculum and research materials. One example of this is their relationship with Full Circle Curriculum and Materials, a non-profit organization founded specifically to respond to the demand created by IEFA for accurate resources from the perspective of Native Americans. OPI has also found innovative partnerships with a variety of organizations to be extremely helpful. Examples of these organizations include the Montana Arts Council and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks.

Culturally appropriate process, materials, and pedagogy: teacher training and professional development

OPI has found that one of the most important parts of this project has been to support teachers and educators so that they feel comfortable and confident teaching about Native Americans in Montana. The 2008 Indian Education for All Best Practice Conference, which we attended for this research, served as a forum for bringing together the different strategies OPI uses to engage and support teachers.

The conference itself featured keynote speeches and workshops from individuals who have begun teaching the Essential Understandings. They communicated their experiences, highlighting individual ways in which they were able to overcome the challenges and hesitations they faced when implementing new IEFA programs in their schools. Conference participants were given their own copies of the accurate Indian resources collected and created by OPI. They were also provided dozens of books,

curriculum guides and pamphlets that were specifically designed to illustrate positive examples of IEFA implementation. These materials are also available from the OPI website, www.opi.state.mt.us.

While at the conference, we had the opportunity to speak with educators who have taken part in diverse courses and immersion experiences co-sponsored by the OPI. For example, some teachers spoke about their experience in a masters-level IEFA curriculum development course at the University of Montana. Another group of teachers raved about their participation in a program that took monthly reservation trips to learn and connect with tribal education leaders and elders. Most conference attendees had participated in at least one OPI-sponsored professional development course, trip or seminar.

One suggestion generated from the conference participants was to improve OPI’s professional development programming through including a clarification and Q&A session *before* each of these classes, seminars or field trips. This session would create a safe, open environment in which educators would feel comfortable asking sensitive questions such as: *What is the difference between costumes and regalia?* This information could greatly support their ability to teach about a culture that many have not previously had the opportunity to learn about.

OPI recognizes that it is common when implementing a new program to get overwhelmed and not know where to begin. They encourage educators to push beyond hesitation and begin by taking small steps, perhaps introducing one new book to the class library or incorporating one new lesson about the nearest reservation. Margaret Petty, keynote speaker and teacher at Lewis and Clark Elementary, related the process to a jigsaw puzzle—you don’t know exactly how the pieces will fit together until you begin. Continuously learning and revising strategies can ultimately lead to a deeper understanding that can be shared with students.

Native Hawaiian Guidelines

Native Hawaiian Guidelines Objectives			
Understanding Cultural Identity	Language Revitalization	Environmental Learning	Preparedness for lifelong learning and leadership
A foundation for well-being	A multi-generational approach	Belonging to the land	Looking toward future generations

Guidelines for Culturally Healthy and Responsive Learning Environments

Understanding cultural identity: a foundation for well-being

Native Hawaiian students need to be engaged in cultural learning that prepares them for making positive choices for the wellbeing of themselves and others. This cultural grounding is particularly important for the many Native Hawaiians who are experiencing poverty and homelessness. Connecting them to their sense of identity and place in the community are essential to helping them grow as capable and healthy people. The Native Hawaiian Education Council created 16 Guidelines for Culturally Healthy and Responsive Learning Environments, modeled after the structure of the Alaska Standards. The first of these guidelines specifically describes this goal of learning for well-being: “Incorporate cultural traditions, language, history and values in meaningful holistic processes to nourish the emotional, physical, mental/intellectual, social, and spiritual well being of the learning community that promote healthy *mauli* and *mana*.” For the complete Guidelines for Culturally Healthy and Responsive Learning Environments, please see Appendix C.

Language Revitalization: a multi-generational approach

Hawaiian language is essential to connecting students to Hawaiian ways of knowing and being in the world. To reverse language loss, the Pūnana Leo, or “Nest of Voices” have been created as multi-generational immersion environments. Young children and their families gain language proficiency through hands-on activities and songs, acquiring skills that can be reinforced at home. A desire to support language programs such as these is expressed in guideline 7: “Engage in Hawaiian language opportunities to increase language proficiency and effective communication skills in a variety of contexts and learning situations.”

Environmental Learning: belonging to the land

Hawaii is a crossroads of many cultures and ideologies interacting with each other and with the natural world. Connecting Native Hawaiian students to their sense of place and belonging to the land can support them in fostering positive relationships with diverse peoples and with the environment. This learning goal is outlined in guideline 14: “Plan for meaningful learner outcomes that foster the relationship and interaction among people, time, space, places and natural elements around them to enhance one’s ability to maintain a “local” disposition with global understanding.”

Preparedness for lifelong learning and leadership: looking toward future generations

Native Hawaiian students must combine traditional values and global life-skills in order to succeed. Their commitment to learning from all past generations should help them to be effective contributors to a more peaceful society. Their education must prepare them to help the next generation honor themselves. Guideline 4 pertains to this goal: “Instill a desire for lifelong exploration of learning, teaching, leading, and reflecting to pursue standards of quality and excellence.”

Native Hawaiian Guidelines Process			
Adaptable, Not Prescriptive Standards	Collaboration and Sharing of Resources	Family and Community Engagement	Culturally Appropriate Process, Materials and Pedagogy
Accessible for diverse applications	Complimentary approaches	Sharing ideas, reaching out	Clear learner outcomes and supported teachers

Family and community engagement: sharing ideas, reaching out

The guidelines are meant to be inclusive of all Hawaiian communities, both at the creation and implementation phases. Thirty-two hearings were held to gather the knowledge and ideas of the people, and compile them into an accessible document named: “Native Hawaiian Education Council Hawaii Guidelines for Culturally Healthy and Responsive Learning Environments.” Respect was shown for the importance of this sharing of ideas by allowing at least two years for this process to take place. The resulting guidelines are meant to reach out to all people in Hawaii.

Adaptable, not prescriptive standards: accessible for diverse applications

The original 16 guidelines lend themselves to adaptation for various purposes, including the support of curriculum design and policy formation. In some cases, the formatting has been altered to suit the specific needs of those implementing them. For instance, one group of teachers and administrators found it useful to condense the 16 guidelines into seven cultural pathways.

Collaboration and sharing of resources: complimentary approaches

The promotion of culturally appropriate learning in Hawaii is a collaborative effort between invested parties including the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, The Department of Education, and Kamehameha schools. It is considered imperative that Native Hawaiian children learn to navigate between complimentary traditional and global systems. In light of this, the movement for culturally appropriate education focuses on enhancing the public school system through partnerships rather than the creation of a separate system.

The groups involved also place importance on sharing best practices and lessons learned with other Native American groups. They have been involved in exchanging information with numerous tribes including the Navajo, the Blackfeet, the Ojibwe and the Anishinabe. This collaboration is considered essential to creating change on a national and international scale.

Culturally appropriate process, materials and pedagogy: clear learner outcomes and supported teachers

Desirable learner outcomes should be clearly defined to create programs with direction and support systems for student progress. This is addressed in the guidelines by the inclusion of specific understandings that learners should be able to exhibit based on their exploration of each cultural topic.

It is also important that teachers have a solid understanding of the cultural standards they are teaching. Many teachers have felt overwhelmed by the movement to reclaim Native Hawaiian culture. Teacher training programs have been developed to help them feel a sense of connectedness to these traditions. In addition, there is a movement in Hawaii to grant teaching licenses to cultural practitioners, such as storytellers or community liaisons. This would mean that the classroom teacher would be supported by a team, with diverse knowledge and skills.

ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Cherokee Nation

To support its mission to “develop and support comprehensive social, educational and employment programs for Cherokee People,” the Cherokee Nation Education Division has employed a number of innovative programs and strategies. For example, the Cherokee Nation Education Corporation is non-profit organization created to provide educational assistance to Cherokee tribal members and revitalize the language, history, and culture of the Cherokee people. The Corporation specifically cites the revitalization of the Cherokee language as its highest priority. Within these priorities, the Nation gives more focused support for older students through its Cherokee Nation Higher Education Program which is structured to strengthen sovereignty, increase citizen capacity, and promote language and culture. For younger students, the Nation runs a cultural day camp, where k-4 students can learn about Cherokee history, art, music, traditional games and crafts. Another way youth can become more involved in their culture and community is through the Youth Tribal Council. Established in 1989, this council is modeled after the traditional council and allows tribe members aged 16-22 to elect its own members, create its own by-laws, and implement its own youth-targeted programs.

Mississippi Choctaw:

The Mississippi Choctaw are most commonly looked to as an example of economic achievement. Currently, the Choctaw Nation is the second largest employer in the state of Mississippi. Education has been a foundation for the Choctaws’ economic development. Between the 1960’s and 1980’s, the Nation underwent a complete educational reform. During this time the Choctaw instated their own superintendent and created their own educational content standards. They also identified the skills most needed on the reservation and initiated an adult education program offering classes in topics such as family life, thrift and economy, and environmental preservation. At the same time, they supported their younger students by opening a youth rehabilitation center. This belief that learning can be done at all stages of life was central to the Nation’s economic revival. Finally, language revitalization became a focus of the new curriculum and today over 85% of the tribe speak Choctaw as their first language.

International Examples:

Canada

The Indian and Métis Curriculum Advisory Committee of Saskatchewan has done extensive work in Regina Public Schools and beyond. They seek to provide support for teachers who value the integration of Indian and Métis content and perspectives in their classrooms. Please see, “Guidelines for Integrating Indian and Métis Content and Perspectives in Curriculum Documents” for an example of the resources they offer in Appendix D.

The Ontario Council of Chiefs Education Co-ordination Unit has made it a priority to define and work towards First-Nations-specific quality education. In this effort, they commissioned the writing of *The New Agenda: A Manifesto for First Nations Education in Ontario*. First Nations people from across Canada carried out the process, seeking to include the views of elders, parents, youth, educators and experts. Please see an excerpt from the chapter, “Elements of Quality in First Nations Education Systems” as an example of their work in Appendix E.

New Zealand

The majority of Maori students in New Zealand are enrolled in public schools that do not take their unique perspectives and needs into account. In response, a tribally-specific cultural standards project has been developed by the Ngati Kūhangunu tribe. This project aims to enhance the public school system for Maori students by infusing localized indigenous content and perspectives. The development of these cultural standards borrowed some key ideas from the Alaska Standards such as: using clear learner outcomes; emphasizing the importance of place-specific language and cultural knowledge; and adapting standards to local circumstances. While gaining inspiration from the Alaska Standards, the project plan was developed from a kaupapa Maori perspective. They also recognize that successful implementation is dependent on the dedication of predominantly non-Maori educators and those who offer them training, support and resources.

COMMON OBJECTIVES

COMMON OBJECTIVES				
	Understanding Cultural Identity	Language Revitalization	Environmental Learning	Preparedness for lifelong learning and leadership
Akwesasne Freedom School	Respect for all things	Immersion approach	Connecting to the rhythm of nature	Sound decision-makers for the future
Alaska Standards	Including the voices of Alaska Natives			A holistic approach to learning
Montana Indian Education for All	Institutional support		Place-based multiculturalism	Developing cooperative local and global citizens
Native Hawaiian Guidelines	A foundation for well-being	A multi-generational approach	Belonging to the land	Looking toward future generations

COMMON PROCESSES:

COMMON PROCESSES				
Example	Adaptable, Not Prescriptive Standards	Collaboration and Sharing of Resources	Family and Community Engagement	Culturally Appropriate Process, Materials and Pedagogy
Akwesasne Freedom School		Friendship with Quaker community	Parent involvement	Mohawk-centered instruction
Alaska Standards	Honoring diversity	Utilizing concurrent indigenous research	Local ownership	A positive framework
Montana Indian Education for All	Essential Understandings	Partnerships with Tribes and organizations		Emphasizing teacher training and professional development
Native Hawaiian Guidelines	Accessible for diverse applications	Complimentary approaches	Sharing ideas, reaching out	Clear learner outcomes and supported teachers

CONSIDERATIONS

While continuing with further phases of the National Cultural Standards project, we suggest that the NIEA keep the following considerations in mind:

- Consider multiple conceptions of culturally appropriate educational achievement. These can include revitalization and maintenance of identity, language, and culture; investment into community, tribal capacity, and sovereignty; and support for academic achievement.
- Be mindful of pre-existing agreements and systems, and take care to build on work that has already been done.
- Be aware of cultural differences across tribes in the United States and strive for a process and product that reflect this diversity.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Common Objectives			
Understanding cultural identity	Language revitalization	Environmental learning	Preparedness for lifelong learning and leadership
Common Processes			
Adaptable, Not Prescriptive Standards	Collaboration and Sharing of Resources	Family and Community Engagement	Culturally Appropriate Process, Materials and Pedagogy
↓	↓	↓	↓
Recommendations			
Avoid prescriptions, keep focus on guiding principles	Establish Partnerships for support and resources	Emphasize role each community has in adapting these principles and staying involved	Maintain Indian ownership at all phases of the project

Recommendations:

Drawing from the common objectives and processes of the aforementioned examples, the following suggestions may be useful to the NIEA for the National Cultural Standards Project:

- Avoid prescriptive standards, keep the focus on guiding principles that can be appropriately adapted by communities and individuals
- Establish partnerships for support and resources
- Emphasize the role each community has in creating, interpreting and implementing these principles
- Maintain Indian ownership at all phases of the project

We very are grateful to those who provided guidance and support during the project, and hope that the information and suggestions gathered will prove useful to the NIEA in future phases of the National Native Cultural Education Standards project.

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