

Relationships, Respect and Revitalization:

GRANTMAKING STRATEGIES: A GUIDE FOR NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION AND PHILANTHROPY

OBSERVATIONS FROM A GRANTMAKERS FOR EDUCATION MEMBER BRIEFING, FEBRUARY 2006

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AMERICAN
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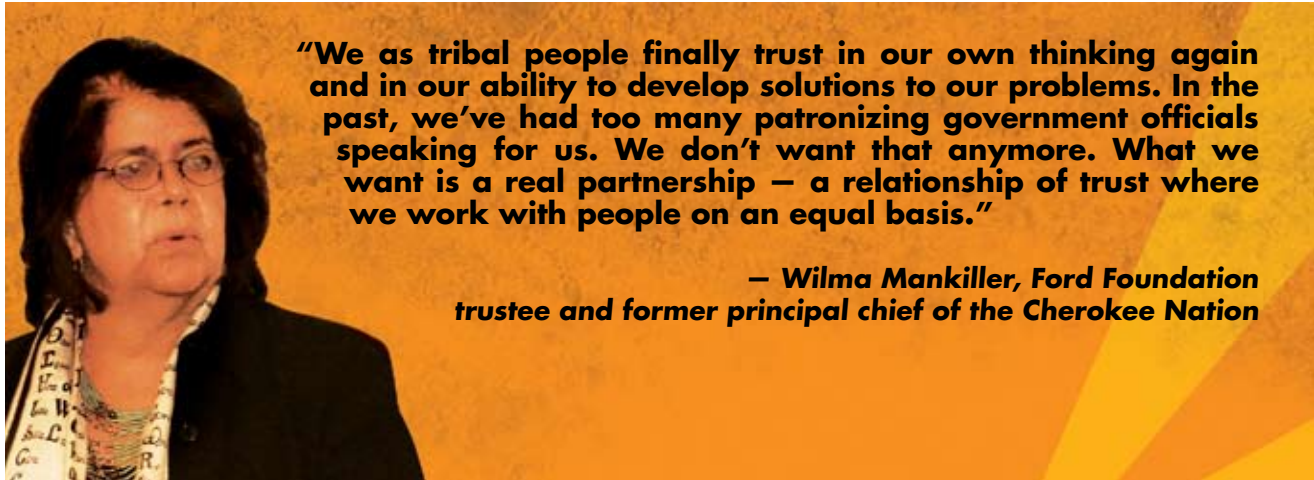
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Executive Summary



"We as tribal people finally trust in our own thinking again and in our ability to develop solutions to our problems. In the past, we've had too many patronizing government officials speaking for us. We don't want that anymore. What we want is a real partnership – a relationship of trust where we work with people on an equal basis."

– Wilma Mankiller, Ford Foundation trustee and former principal chief of the Cherokee Nation

American Indian education has an important place in U.S. education, and grantmakers can form lasting relationships with indigenous communities that will have a broad impact on not only Native education, but on education in the U.S. as a whole. These relationships can yield transformational change in Indian communities and can be rewarding for grantmakers as they see the results of their efforts and investments.

American Indians have some of the lowest educational attainment rates of any ethnic group in the United States. Not coincidentally, one in four American Indians live below the poverty line, and reservation communities are among the poorest in the nation. Across all levels of education, Native people still struggle to access and succeed in education. Despite these facts, there is hope. A new era of self-determination in Indian education and growing partnerships with the philanthropic community have yielded tremendous breakthroughs in recent years.

In February 2006, a Grantmakers for Education member briefing brought together grantmakers, American Indian educators, directors of innovative Native educational programs and scholars to discuss cultural and educational issues in Indian Country and appropriate strategies for grantmaking.

This report is a summary of key findings from the briefing. Its purpose is to provide grantmakers with an overview of contemporary topics in Native education as well as a clear set of strategies they can employ to make policy and funding decisions in the following areas: early childhood education, K-12 education, tribal colleges and universities, post-secondary education and graduate school, language and culture, and teacher training.

STRATEGIES FOR GRANTMAKERS

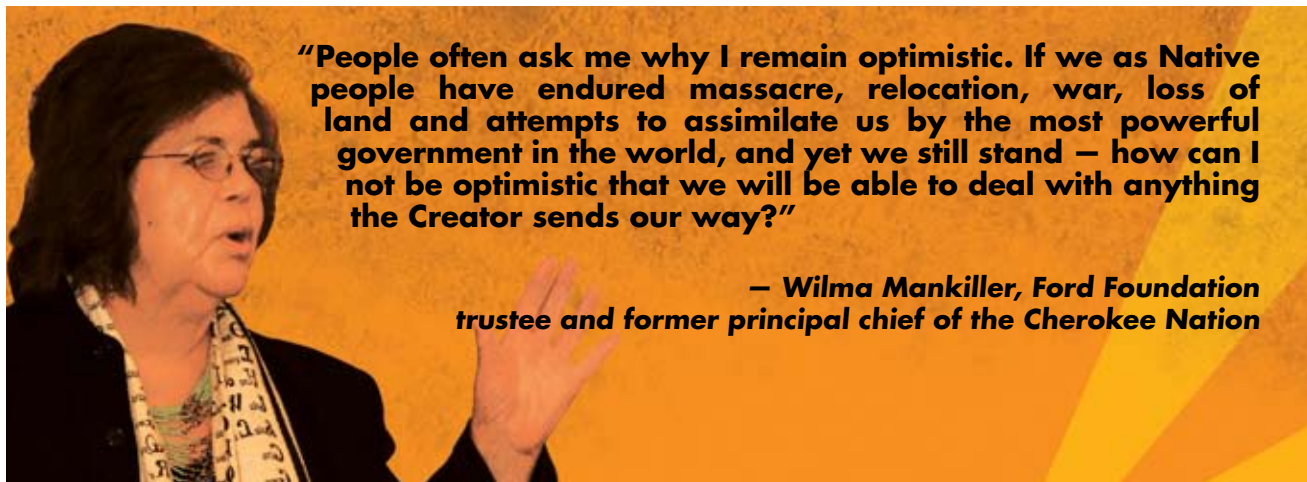
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	Take action to ensure that all American Indian children have access to and participate in early childhood education programs.
K-12 EDUCATION	Take the lead in acknowledging that the current system fails American Indian students and in advocating for a redefinition of American Indian K-12 education based upon successful models across the broad spectrum of Indian education.
TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES	Create mechanisms for bridging the funding gap between tribal colleges and universities and their mainstream institutional counterparts.
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND GRADUATE SCHOOL	Promote programs aimed at increasing persistence and degree attainment by Native Americans.
LANGUAGE AND CULTURE	Recognize that incorporating American Indian language and culture into curricula is absolutely essential to improving educational outcomes for Native students.
TEACHER TRAINING	Support programs that recruit and retain high-quality teachers in underserved schools serving large Native populations.

A recurring theme throughout the briefing was how small efforts and programs that may seem fragile can lead to strong and successful programs that have a far-reaching effect on Indian people. It is necessary to nurture those fragile seeds through stable and consistent funding and support. Examples abound of successful educational efforts that would not have survived without philanthropic support. What may seem an insurmountable task backed by only a few driven individuals can indeed grow over time into something much greater.

HOW FOUNDATIONS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Adopt a long-term vision and provide consistent and reliable funding to promising organizations to reach that vision.
Share information about Native programs and projects with colleagues from other foundations who may have an interest in Native initiatives but are unsure how or where to begin.
Support research initiatives to gather more data on Native communities. At all levels, there is a woeful lack of research and data to paint an accurate picture of challenges as well as evidence of effective interventions and programs.
Do not be discouraged by tribal diversity and the need to tailor programs to the specific community. Initial research is incredibly valuable because it can be utilized by practitioners in other communities who can build upon the research.
Partner with other foundations to support large collaborative initiatives to have a deeper, lasting impact.

Who We Are



Native people of the United States regard themselves as powerful, deeply spiritual and resilient. There are 4.1 million American Indians and Alaska Natives, who comprise 1.5 percent of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau [Census], 2001). There are 401,000 Native Hawaiians (Census, 2001).

SOVEREIGNTY

American Indians hold central their rights to tribal sovereignty or inherent authority for self-governance. While federal policy recognizes tribal sovereignty, American Indian land rights are held in trust by the federal government, and federal law oversees and determines the economic and political rights of tribal governments. Not surprisingly, research consistently shows that tribes outperform non-tribal decision makers when empowered to make critical decisions regarding the social and economic needs of their communities (Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, 2006). Sovereignty is immensely important to Native people, who have struggled to retain it.

DIVERSITY

America's indigenous people represent over 560 different nations with varying cultural values, languages and land base sizes. While Native people may hold many similar ideologies, such as reverence for nature and respect for elders, one must be careful not to generalize.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

When describing themselves, Native American people refer to themselves primarily by tribal affiliation and also as American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian. However, the Census groups Native Hawaiians in a separate category with other Pacific Islanders, creating a challenge when trying to extrapolate data on this specific indigenous population.

The abbreviation AI-AN will be used throughout this report to refer to American Indians and Alaska Natives as a group. The report will use the term Native Hawaiians when directly referring to this group.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Twenty-five percent of all AI-ANs live below the poverty line, double the national poverty rate (Census, 2005). American Indians living on rural reservations face more challenging economic situations than their urban counterparts. In fact, the poverty rate of American Indian families living on rural reservations is 14 percent higher than among all other American Indian families (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005).

Many believe that Indian gaming has produced enough revenue for tribes to care for all community needs. However, less than half of all tribes engage in gaming. Of these, only a limited number fare well. Revenues from gaming are regulated by tribal, state and federal laws and must be used toward tribal community needs such as schools, health care, community infrastructure, housing, elder care or roads or toward philanthropic gifts.

Overall, American Indian people are more self-sufficient and healthier than ever before as tribes gain control over their cultural and economic future. However, they continue to suffer from poverty at higher rates than the rest of the nation. In fact, researchers concluded, “[Even] if U.S. and on-reservation Indian per capita incomes were to continue to grow at their 1990s rates, it would [still] take half a century for the tribes to catch up” (Taylor & Kalt, 2005). Grantmakers can work collaboratively with Native communities to meet remaining needs.

NATIVE PHILANTHROPY

Consistent with Native American values of sharing, gaming tribes contributed over \$100 million in philanthropic gifts in 2004 (National Indian Gaming Association, 2004). Tribes that have been successful in gaming have expressed their generosity not only to other Native American communities, but to communities in the greater U.S. as well. The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community of Minnesota has contributed over \$57 million in philanthropic gifts since 1997 (Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, 2003). The Shakopee made a pledge to the American Indian College Fund of \$1.5 million toward a scholarship endowment for Native students and the National Indian Gaming Association has announced it will raise an additional \$5 million for the organization. The Shakopee have also provided substantial gifts to national and non-Native organizations.

Other tribes have developed funds serving as the philanthropic arm of their community. The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde in Oregon, for example, operate the Spirit Mountain Community Fund, which donates \$5 million annually to not-for-profit organizations (Spirit Community Fund, 2006).

A Brief History of American Indian Education



"We are different in that much of our knowledge comes from spiritual sources. It is very different from American education, which tells us that knowledge comes from scientific proof and doesn't acknowledge that we can receive knowledge from spiritual sources."

– Cheryl Crazy Bull (Sicangu Lakota), Northwest Indian College president

Historically, education was the enemy of Native people. Although tribes had traditional means of teaching children, formal education was originally intended to extinguish Native lifeways. Over time, these efforts took many forms, but until very recently the intent was always the same: assimilation.

BOARDING SCHOOL ERA: LATE 1800s - EARLY 1900s

In 1819, Congress began a system of mission schools, which evolved into government boarding schools situated far from reservations with the intent to assimilate Indian children into the dominant culture (Reyhner et al., 2004). Educational reformers argued that assimilation would occur more rapidly if children were separated from their families and tribal communities. After efforts to coerce parents failed, children were forcibly removed and often kidnapped from their communities (Childs, 1999).

Conditions at boarding schools were abusive and militant, and educators were fiercely committed to eradicating Indian languages and culture. Upon entering school, Indian children's hair was cut, their names changed and their clothing replaced in an effort to strip them of their identities. Indian students were punished severely for speaking their languages and practicing their religions. Indian parents were forbidden from seeing their children. When students eventually returned to their communities, having forgotten how to speak their languages, they faced difficulty reintegrating into Native society.

GRADUAL CHANGES: 1920s-1950s

The inability to effectively assimilate Indian children forced educators to rethink Indian policy. In 1928, publication of the *Meriam Report*, an investigation of Indian affairs, detailed the poor living conditions of Indian people, attacked the boarding schools and advocated that American Indian children be taught within their own communities. Consequently, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) soon replaced boarding schools with day schools built on the reservations, so that Indian children could remain close to home. While the situation for Indian children had improved, they were still forbidden from speaking their languages, and educators continued to emphasize assimilation and "life adjustment" classes as opposed to more rigorous academic and cultural coursework.

SELF-DETERMINATION: 1960s-1970s

The Civil Rights Movement inspired Indian educators to demand greater control over their children's education. In 1969, Congress released *Indian Education: A National Tragedy, a National Challenge* (also known as the Kennedy Report). This report revealed that drop-out rates among Indian students were twice the national average, achievement levels of Indian children were two to three years below those of white students and Indian children fell further behind the longer they remained in school. The Kennedy Report called for educational programs that would make BIA schools and public schools more supportive of Native American culture and the unique educational needs of Native learners (Reyhner et al., 2004).

In response, Congress passed legislation that provided additional funds for Indian children. Schools were required to involve parents and communities in the development of educational programs. For the very first time, culturally relevant and bilingual curricula were introduced to Native students in the classroom. Indian students were also offered increased funding for higher education. However, leaving the reservation to attend college was often traumatic and expensive. The failure of post-secondary education to recruit and retain Native students compelled Native leaders to establish tribal colleges on their reservations.

LOOKING AHEAD: 1980s-PRESENT

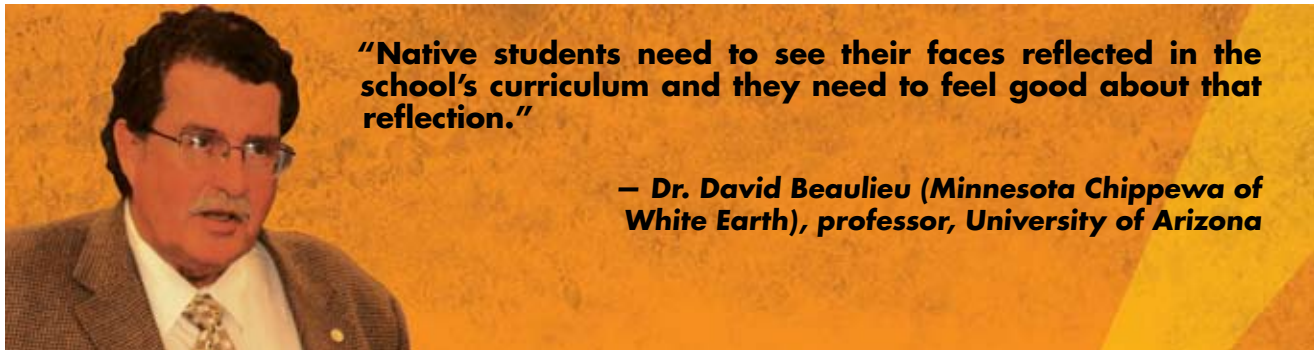
The history of American Indian education has been extremely distressing for Native communities. Native people are overcoming this painful past by taking greater control over their children's education. Recent events in Indian education reflect the desire of Native Americans to reverse the policies that initially threatened to extinguish Native languages and cultures.

In 1991, the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force revealed that there is still much to be accomplished in Indian education, including bringing more culturally sensitive curricula to the classroom, giving students the opportunity to develop and maintain their tribal languages and increasing the number of high-quality Native teachers and administrators.

Fifteen years later, Indian educators are still trying to address many of these same concerns. Philanthropic organizations have been valuable allies to Indian educators. Most importantly, they have taken the time to build relationships with Native communities in order to develop innovative programs that meet the needs of Native learners. Consequently, Native communities have begun healing from their educational past and are moving forward with a steadfast vision for the future.

Early Childhood Education

Take action to ensure that all American Indian children have access to and participate in early childhood education programs.



AMERICAN INDIAN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

AI-AN infants at 8 to 22 months old demonstrate early motor and cognitive skill development similar to other 8 to 22 month olds (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005).

As many as one in three children enters kindergarten unprepared to learn (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2006).

Rural AI-AN children are significantly less likely than rural white, black and Hispanic children to be proficient at letter recognition, are less likely to be proficient at beginning sound recognition and are less likely to exhibit self control (Rural Early Childhood, 2005).

Head Start has immediate positive effects on children’s socio-emotional development, including self-esteem, achievement, motivation and social behavior (Parker et al., 1987).

Rural AI-AN kindergarteners are less likely than non-rural AI-AN kindergarteners to have a parent read to them three or more times per week (Rural Early Childhood, 2005).

A higher proportion of Head Start parents read to their children more frequently than those parents of children who are not enrolled in Head Start (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005).

Providing access to quality early childcare can help close America’s growing economic and academic achievement gaps across low-income communities (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2006).

The importance of quality early childcare and education cannot be overstated. Numerous studies demonstrate that cognitive, linguistic, emotional and social development occurs rapidly in the first years of life. Receipt of quality early childcare positively impacts a child’s ability to develop the skills necessary for a solid foundation for later schooling.

As of 2004, there were 270,587 AI-AN children under the age of five (Census, 2005). However, only a small number of these children receive even the most basic forms of early childhood education. While there are myriad reasons for this, GFE Presenter Nila Rinehart (Taos Pueblo) shared her own experience as project director for the National Interim Head Start through the Community Development Institute:

“We discovered that parents weren’t interested in their child’s education because it didn’t speak to who they were as Native people, to their history and culture. It was difficult for parents to emotionally, spiritually and mentally connect to what we were trying to provide. So we developed curriculum to incorporate the stories and wisdom of the elders and the culture keepers. We as educators too often forget to remember the beauty and the strength that our people hold.”

GFE Presenter Linda Kills Crow (Delaware Tribe of Eastern Oklahoma), director of the Tribal Child Care Technical Assistance Center, concurred, adding that, “the participation and support of parents, while often-times challenging to attain, nonetheless has a positive effect on school readiness.” Surprisingly, Head Start centers in Native communities have not traditionally combined Native culture in the curricula.

Recognizing the importance of helping children build a secure sense of self through nurturing the connection to family and community, Rinehart developed a successful culturally based curriculum for the Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of the Alaska Head Start program. *At Yatx’l Satu Kei Nas.a’x Curriculum* uses a tribal framework, including units on subjects such as salmon ecology, and incorporates values taught in the community such as respect for nature.

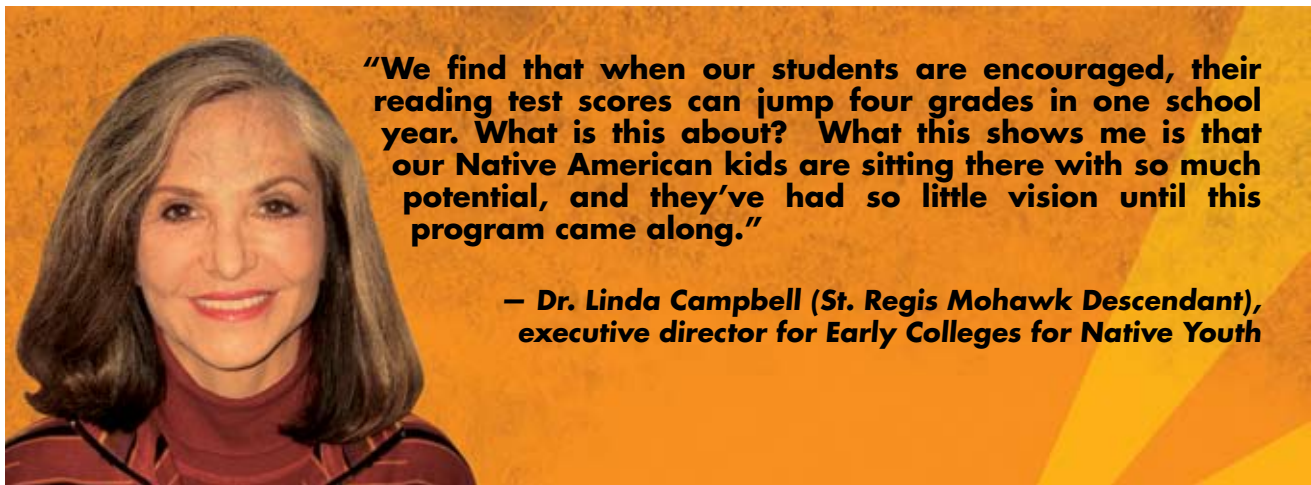
Parental involvement was targeted through the *Family Feathers Program*, where parents and grandparents could watch culturally appropriate videos about child development. Additionally, community members were encouraged to participate in the classroom through paid and volunteer positions. The curriculum significantly increased parental and community involvement, helping to overcome some of the risk factors AI-AN children face and increasing school readiness.

Numerous researchers and practitioners, including GFE presenters Rinehart and Kills Crow, have pointed to the need for a clearinghouse where practitioners can access early childhood studies and initiate dialogue with one another.

FURTHER STRATEGIES FOR GRANTMAKERS
Help states and Native communities to work in partnership to mutually develop standards that address early learning expectations for Native children.
Invest in research projects to gather and analyze data that demonstrate the effect of culturally relevant programs on school readiness.
Promote information sharing through the establishment of a clearinghouse.
Provide funds for training, technical assistance, support and evaluation of effective early childhood education programs and teacher education.
Provide funding for organizations to undergo an assessment of their communities’ wants and needs before selecting the appropriate model.

K-12 Education

Take the lead in acknowledging that the current system fails American Indian students and in advocating for a redefinition of American Indian K-12 based upon successful models across the broad spectrum of Indian education.



AMERICAN INDIAN K-12 EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

Currently, 624,000 AI-AN students are enrolled in K-12 public and BIA schools (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2005).

At both grades 4 and 8, AI-AN students score lower, on average, on reading and mathematics achievement tests than the average of all other students in the nation (NCES, 2006).

Twelve percent of AI-AN children receive special education services, compared to 8 percent of white children, 8 percent of Hispanic children, 11 percent of black children and 4 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander children (NCES, 2005).

AI-AN students have more absences from school than any other race, and are second only to black students in their rate of suspension and expulsion from school (NCES, 2005).

AI-AN high school graduates are far less likely than other students to have completed a core academic track (NCES, 2005).

Fifteen percent of AI-AN students drop out of high school, compared to 6.3 percent of white students (NCES, 2005).

One in two AI-AN students between the ages of 12 and 17 have used alcohol in the past month and more than one in five students reported being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property in the past year (NCES, 2005).

The K-12 educational system is failing Native children. Across all areas, Native students are clearly not receiving the same quality of education as other American children. Despite gains made over the past thirty years to rectify the historical harm inflicted upon Native communities through education, significant and substantial improvement has yet to occur in Indian Country.

Low standardized achievement test scores combined with high drop-out rates demonstrate that AI-AN students continue to struggle in traditional K-12 schools. Teachers at schools with high Indian enrollment have reported problems such as students coming to school unprepared, lack of parental involvement, poverty and student apathy more than teachers at low Indian enrollment schools (Research Triangle Institute, 1997). Further, in the current era of high stakes standardized testing, the presence of culture-based curricula is in danger of being diminished rather than enhanced.

Given this environment, the philanthropic community has the potential to make a considerable impact upon Native K-12 education. By partnering with Native communities, as equals, grantmakers can help re-define K-12 education to meet these communities' unique needs. Fortunately, as evidenced by presenters at the GFE member briefing, successful models already exist from which lessons can be learned and improved educational outcomes can be achieved.

Early College High Schools for Native Youth is one such program. This initiative was launched by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation with support from the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford Foundation, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and Lumina Foundation for Education. With a mission to merge culture, high school and college, students typically take college preparatory courses in 9th and 10th grades and begin taking college courses in the 11th grade. Schools partner with universities to provide courses and have governance structures that include tribal leaders. In some institutions, elders co-teach some of the college courses.

Results indicate that academically rigorous education grounded in Native community design and delivery can effectively help close the achievement gap. Consider these facts:

- Students at Ferndale High School near the Lummi Reservation in Washington scored in the 90th percentile in reading, the 67th percentile in math and the 80th percentile in writing on state achievement tests.
- The Ferndale drop-out rate decreased from 69 percent to 16 percent among Native students.
- Students attending Tulalip Heritage High School on the Tulalip Reservation in Washington improved between one and four grade levels on reading tests in 2005 (Campbell, 2006).

Such results can be attributed to a supportive environment where students are challenged by high expectations and academic rigor, where elders and community members have an active role in teaching and governing the school and where students are given close instruction and mentorship. By 2008, there will be 18 early colleges across the nation specifically serving AI-AN students (Campbell, 2006).

Because many believe that a complete redefinition of K-12 Native education is necessary in order to see marked improvements, it is worth drawing some parallels to the tribal college movement. Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs), created in order to address the failure of a mainstream educational system to educate Native students, have evolved from the humblest of origins to serve nearly one in five Indian students in college today. True community institutions, TCUs have partnered with tribal governments and communities as well as philanthropic institutions to create a successful educational movement rooted in culture and tradition. If early leaders of this movement did not envision a better future beyond the parameters of the existing system, tens of thousands of Native students could never have found the educational success they have. Similarly, a new vision of K-12 Native education is needed today.

FURTHER STRATEGIES FOR GRANTMAKERS

Support programs that promote local and tribal control over K-12 education in Native communities. Building effective partnerships with tribal education programs and those serving tribal communities will enhance the likelihood of improved outcomes.

Support programs that develop and implement Native culture into the heart of pedagogy, curricula, community engagement and assessment. Academic rigor can be incorporated alongside cultural curricula. Indeed, anecdotal evidence suggests that Native students respond well to an integrated approach combining the two.

Provide funding for research in K-12 Native education. Data is sorely lacking in both identifying problem areas and in tracking the success of alternative K-12 programs.

Encourage organizations to work with parents to participate in all aspects of their child’s education.

Work with policymakers at the highest level to ensure that cultural education and needs are not sacrificed in the era of high stakes standardized testing.

Tribal Colleges and Universities

Create mechanisms for bridging the funding gap between tribal colleges and universities and their mainstream institutional counterparts.

“Without question, the most significant development in American Indian communities since World War II was the creation of tribally controlled colleges.”

– Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AT A GLANCE

The tribal college movement began with the establishment of Navajo Community College, now Diné College, in 1968. It has since grown to include 32 TCUs in 11 different states, educating approximately 30,000 students (American Indian College Fund [Fund], 2006).

TCUs have never received their full congressional appropriation and receive significantly less federal funding than most equivalent mainstream institutions. For example, in the 2006 fiscal year, federal appropriations fell \$14.6 million short of the amount needed for full funding. Still, this was an improvement of the president’s original funding recommendation, which was just more than half of full funding (Hiestand, 2006).

TCUs do not receive funding for non-Indian students even though up to 20 percent of the total student population at tribal colleges consists of non-Indians (Fund, 2006).

Between 1997 and 2002, enrollment of American Indian students at tribal colleges grew by 32 percent, compared to 16 percent enrollment growth in higher educational institutions overall (Fund, 2006).

Tribal college faculty members, on average, earn \$10,000 less annually than their community college counterparts (Fund, 2006).

Fifty-six percent of tribal college graduates go on to a four-year institution, a far greater number than the transfer rate of community colleges in general (Fund, 2006).

American Indian educators and leaders of the 1960s, recognized the failure of mainstream higher educational institutions to adequately prepare, nurture and graduate American Indian students—and responded by creating tribal colleges and universities (TCUs). Vastly different from other institutions, most TCUs have been established on reservations by Indian people and incorporate American Indian language, philosophy and culture with western academics. As flagship institutions representing self-determination in education, TCUs have come to symbolize a new era in Indian higher education.

Since the first TCUs were established over thirty years ago, they have done nothing short of change the face of Indian higher education. Nearly one in five Native students in higher education today attends a tribal college. Students who would not otherwise have access to post-secondary education are not only attaining their educational goals, they may now remain in their communities to do so.

Interestingly, researchers Anna M. Ortiz and Iris Heavy Runner have theorized that the tribal colleges and universities had an impact on the increase in the number of AI-AN students earning both associate's and bachelor's degrees (2003). The authors note that in 1982, there were only 2,100 AI-AN students enrolled at tribal colleges and universities; by 2001, this number increased dramatically to 13,800 full-time and part-time AI-AN students. They state that this seven-fold increase is a reflection of the positive influence and strong impact TCUs have on AI-AN students (2003).

Their theory is supported by the fact that, between years 1990 and 1991, approximately 5,000 bachelor's degrees were awarded to AI-AN students and between years 2002 and 2003, approximately 10,000 bachelor's degrees were awarded (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). According to Ortiz and Heavy Runner, this shift may also signify the success of tribal colleges in helping American Indian students transfer to four-year higher education institutions (2003). Research indicates that AI-AN students often have a difficult time adjusting to life at mainstream, predominantly white four-year institutions. TCUs offer a number of resources and support services that help many students successfully make this transition, including remedial courses to supplement poor-quality high school education (Ortiz and Heavy Runner, 2003). These courses can be taken at TCUs at a fraction of the cost and without the stigma that might be attached at mainstream institutions and can prepare students for four-year degree programs (Ortiz and Heavy Runner, 2003).

Partnerships with the philanthropic community are the cause of much of the innovative programming and improved outcomes that have occurred in recent years. For example, in 1997 the American Indian College Fund began work on its first capital campaign at the request of the tribal colleges, many of whom operated out of abandoned or condemned buildings. With significant lead gifts from the Lilly Endowment and the W.K. Kellogg, Archibald Bush, David and Lucile Packard and Tierney Family foundations, TCUs leveraged the \$44.7 million in direct grants into an additional \$87 million in federal, tribal, state and private grants. For years, construction of new facilities on TCU campuses seemed an impossible dream. Yet, once private foundations provided the leadership, others quickly followed suit to the betterment of the entire TCU system.

While the TCUs are filled with success stories, they face many challenges their mainstream counterparts do not. First, their rural locations and lack of resources make it difficult to attract and retain talented leadership, faculty and staff. Many, if not all, campuses still have ongoing capital needs and also need funds for student scholarships. Above all else, the struggle to secure funding for basic operating expenses is an annual ordeal. According to a recent survey, virtually all of the tribal colleges identified operational support as their greatest need.

In their relatively short history, TCUs have produced significant outcomes with respect to both the impact upon individual students as well as upon local communities and tribal economies. In addition to the rapid growth of enrollment, degrees conferred and number of institutions, consider these facts:

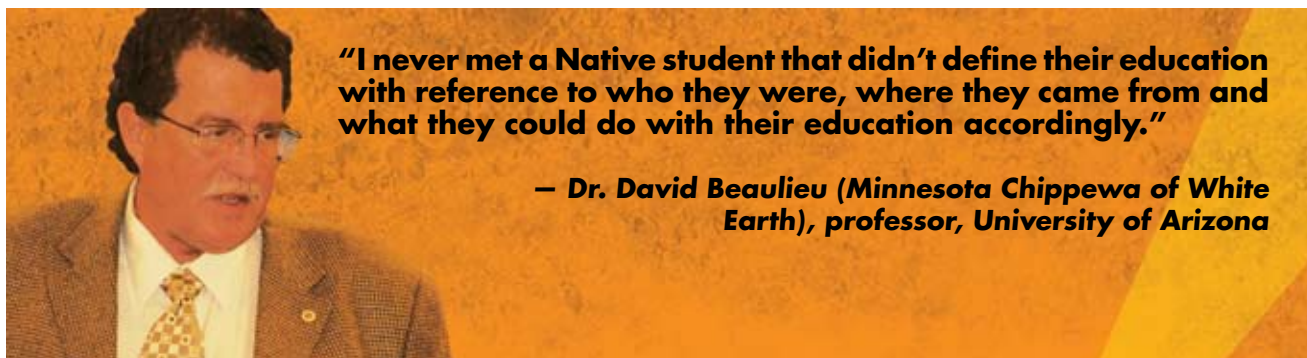
- In a recent survey of tribal college graduates, 60 percent were employed and 22 percent were working and going to school simultaneously. This is particularly significant when considering that some reservations served by TCUs have unemployment rates as high as 85 percent (Institute for Higher Education Policy [IHEP], 2006).
- Seventy-one percent of graduates who were working reported that their education was “good” or “excellent” preparation for employment. Sixty-nine percent of those continuing their education believed that their TCU provided “good” or “excellent” preparation for further education (IHEP, 2006).
- Scholarship recipients earn degrees and work in important areas for tribal communities. Seventeen percent of graduates work in education, 14 percent in social work and human services and another 10 percent in health care or nursing (IHEP, 2006).
- In some reservation communities, up to 87 percent of households rely upon micro-businesses as a source of income. TCUs have been active in not only assisting budding entrepreneurs in securing micro-loans for small business development, but several small business have actually derived from business plans developed in TCU classrooms. Business is the most popular major among tribal college graduates (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2000).

With only a fraction of the financial resources that their mainstream counterparts receive, tribal colleges have successfully revolutionized post-secondary education in the U.S. today. They have demonstrated what is possible when self-determination and Native culture are the guiding forces behind educational reform. This begs the question: “If TCUs have achieved so much with so little, what could be achieved if parity existed in funding between TCUs and their mainstream counterparts?”

FURTHER STRATEGIES FOR GRANTMAKERS
Recognize and address operational support disparities between tribal colleges and their mainstream counterparts. Partner with other foundations to fund larger initiatives and campaigns. Create and fund endowments for scholarships, professional chairs and capital projects.
Continue support of scholarships as they impact students’ ability to remain in school.
Support current initiatives to gather more data on tribal colleges that will be used to demonstrate the successes of these institutions.
Reward innovative programs that foster professional development and retention of highly qualified TCU faculty and staff.
Visit a tribal college. TCUs are unlike any other educational institutions in the nation. Get to know the dedicated individuals who have created these “underfunded miracles.”

Post-Secondary Education and Graduate School

Promote programs aimed at increasing persistence and degree attainment of Native Americans.



AMERICAN INDIAN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND GRADUATE SCHOOL AT A GLANCE

Over the past twenty-five years, the number of associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees conferred to AI-AN students doubled (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2005).

Between 1980 and 2002, the percentage of AI-AN 10th graders who expected to complete a bachelor's degree or higher increased from 31 percent to 76 percent (NCES, 2005).

Despite these gains, a lower percentage of AI-AN students complete a bachelor's degree than all other racial/ethnic groups except Hispanics (NCES, 2005).

Graduate and professional degrees conferred to AI-AN students represent only .006 percent of the total number of such degrees conferred in 2002-2003 (NCES, 2005).

AI-ANs account for 0.5 percent of faculty in degree-granting institutions and are more likely to serve as instructors rather than professors or associate professors (NCES, 2005).

The reason tribal college graduates cite for leaving previously enrolled mainstream universities: lack of financial support (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2006).

In general, the median annual earnings for full-time workers 25 and older are (Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 2006):

\$26,000	High school diploma
\$31,700	Associate's degree
\$40,100	Bachelor's degree
\$50,000	Master's degree
\$62,400	Doctorate
\$71,700	Professional degree

Despite gains made in the number of Native students matriculating to and graduating from college, higher education remains a challenging arena for Native students—one where support structures are too often not in place to prevent setbacks and, ultimately, attrition. Research indicates that AI-AN students often have a difficult time adjusting to life at mainstream four-year institutions. Often, they possess unique characteristics, beliefs, values and learning styles that separate them from other ethnic groups at mainstream universities. They are often ill-prepared for the rigors of higher education and in dire need of remedial services.

For myriad reasons, Native college students require additional support at mainstream institutions. According to one study, “obstacles include prejudice, finances, language barriers and alcoholism.” As a result, more than 90 percent of Native students surveyed considered leaving college at some point (Teicher, 2006). Native American college students also differ from their non-Native peers in that academic and social integration are much stronger predictors of retention and degree completion than other factors (Ortiz and Heavy Runner, 2003).

Therefore, cultural centers, counseling programs, student organizations and other means of institutional support play a vital role in helping AI-AN students succeed at mainstream institutions. These extended families often help counter feelings of isolation and hostility (Ortiz and Heavy Runner, 2003). Unfortunately, these valuable support structures do not exist on every campus.

As the previous section noted, tribal colleges and universities have figured heavily into the increase of AI-AN students earning both associate’s and bachelor’s degrees (Ortiz and Heavy Runner, 2003). As enrollment at TCUs continues to swell, it behooves educators to examine the appeal and success of these institutions when seeking appropriate best practices in mainstream institutions. Providing cultural continuity, the presence of a critical mass of Native students and institutional commitment to their success from the highest level all can be replicated at mainstream universities.

Briefing presenter David Beaulieu pointed out that many AI-AN students pursue a higher education because they possess a strong desire to give back to their communities. Through philanthropic efforts to support these students, Indian Country will see a rise in the number of doctors, engineers, spiritual leaders, business professionals and educators to meet the needs of Native communities.

COLLEGE HORIZONS AND GRADUATE HORIZONS

The College Horizons program, administered through the American Indian Graduate Center, matches students with admission officers and assists with the college planning process. The guidance offered by this type of support structure can have a tremendous impact on the success of AI-AN college students. In 2004, 98 percent of the students who had attended College Horizons were either in college or had graduated, and more than half had gone on to highly competitive institutions (Hoover, 2004).

In addition, Graduate Horizons, a pre-graduate school preparation program, offers a very similar support structure to AI-AN college graduates interested in pursuing a post-baccalaureate degree. The increase in graduate degrees conferred to AI-AN students suggests that the need for these types of pre-graduate preparation programs is greater than ever before.

FURTHER STRATEGIES FOR GRANTMAKERS

Fund pre-college planning programs and first-generation scholars. Typically, Native American students are the first in their families to go to college. They often need additional support with the college application process including help with financial aid.

Assist with studies that measure factors that influence degree attainment and persistence. Such studies are needed to help understand the types of intervention programs necessary to support students.

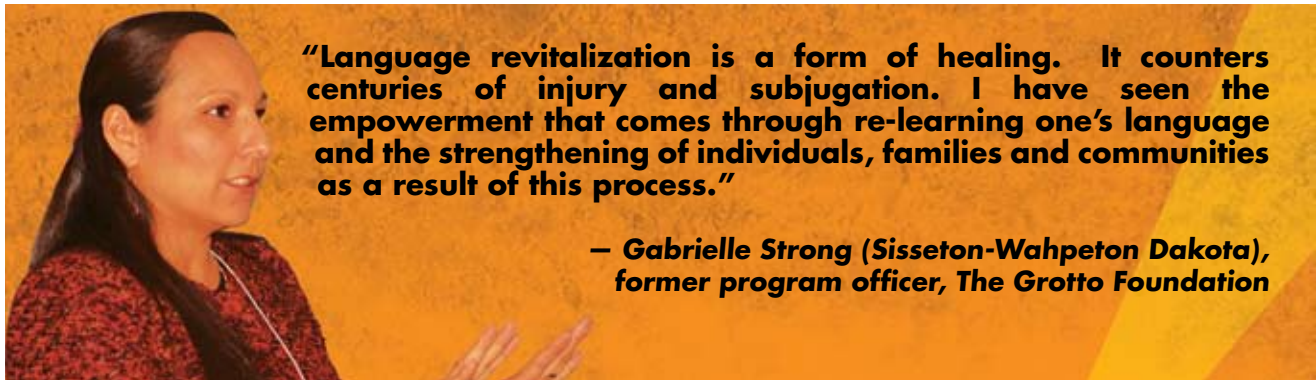
Fund faculty and staff training to help university employees understand the unique needs of AI-AN learners. Research indicates that Native American students benefit from their ability to build strong, positive relationships with faculty and staff members. However, educators do not always understand the educational needs of their Native students.

Provide funding for cultural centers, student organizations and remediation services.

Provide scholarships for post-baccalaureate students, who typically receive the least amount of funding towards their degree programs.

Language and Culture

Recognize that incorporating American Indian language and culture into curricula is absolutely essential to improving educational outcomes for Native students.



LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN NATIVE EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

Of the 300 Native languages spoken at the time of European contact, it is estimated only 20 will still be viable in 2050 (Williams, 2006).

Bilingual students score significantly higher on standardized tests conducted in English than monolingual students. Second language instruction improves overall school performance, increases student creativity, and strengthens students’ complex problem-solving skills (Pease-Pretty On Top, 2004).

A survey of North Dakota teachers revealed that 99 percent did not have books about Native Americans in their classroom and that 91 percent did not plan activities reflecting Native culture, despite the fact that this state has a substantial Native American population (Swisher et al., 1999).

Native Hawaiian children who participated in culturally-based experimental math curriculum scored in the 82nd percentile in a standardized math test, versus children in the control class who received average scores in the 54th percentile (Lipka, 2002).

Resilient Native students are well-grounded and connected to their tribal culture. Research from one program concluded that “feeling good about their tribal culture was a consistent theme among these students, who talked about their...participation in cultural activities; strong, positive feelings about belonging to a Native community...and participation in a school curriculum that included Native history, language and culture (emphasis added) (Strand et al., 2002).

According to recommendations made by the Democratic Steering and Outreach Committee to the 109th Congress, "The incorporation of Native American culture and traditions into academic curriculum and education programming is essential to success in Indian education. The study and development of sound, culturally relevant curricula should be supported to ensure effective implementation of education programs and requirements in Indian Country" (Democratic Steering and Outreach Committee, 2005). For the U.S. Congress to advocate such action is a sure sign that much progress has been made since the days of assimilationist educational policy. Still, much needs to be done in implementing and evaluating the role of language in the classroom.

Retention of indigenous languages holds the key to perpetuating valuable Native ideologies, history, philosophy and medicinal knowledge. Native communities unanimously agree that revitalizing indigenous languages is a top priority. Having endured centuries of federal efforts to eradicate indigenous languages, Native people now face an uncertain future wherein the majority of Native languages hover on the brink of extinction. As a result, indigenous educators have launched a crucial campaign to promote language revitalization, particularly through the education of Native youth.

For those communities fortunate enough to have the resources to do so, language immersion education has proven the best method to produce a significant number of fluent speakers. GFE presenter Nāmaka Rawlins, director of the Hawaiian immersion program 'Aha Pūnana Leo, recounted the days when fewer than 50 Hawaiian speakers under the age of 18 existed. Modeling their immersion education system after that of the Māori of New Zealand, the program has grown to now include pre-K through Ph.D. immersion education, as well as adult immersion education for parents. As a result, whole generations of Native Hawaiian children, and their families, are reaping the benefits of immersion education.

Given the stringent teacher qualifications required under No Child Left Behind and the rising wave of "English only" sentiments, language revitalization is in particular need of support from the non-profit and philanthropic sectors. Indeed, some grantmakers have already made significant inroads. GFE presenter Gabrielle Strong, formerly of the Grotto Foundation, presented the foundation's language preservation efforts. Having given approximately 37 percent of its grant support to American Indian programs, Grotto has made a \$5.6 million, 15-year-long term commitment to Native language revitalization in Minnesota.

While anecdotal evidence abounds regarding the relationship between culturally-infused curricula and improved student achievement, there is surprisingly little data on this topic. The past thirty years of Indian education has witnessed the infusion of Native culture into the classroom. Indian educators know from experience what is working with students. At the same time, we recognize quantitative data must be collected to supplement the qualitative data and to make the most compelling case to potential supporters. Grantmakers could greatly assist data collection efforts.

FURTHER STRATEGIES FOR GRANTMAKERS

Support immersion education. Immersion education has proved the most effective way to produce fluent speakers. The financial need for pre-K-12 and adult immersion education is massive and spans across all tribal communities.

Take a long-term approach to supporting all language revitalization efforts. It takes years—even generations—for language programs to mature and create fluent speakers.

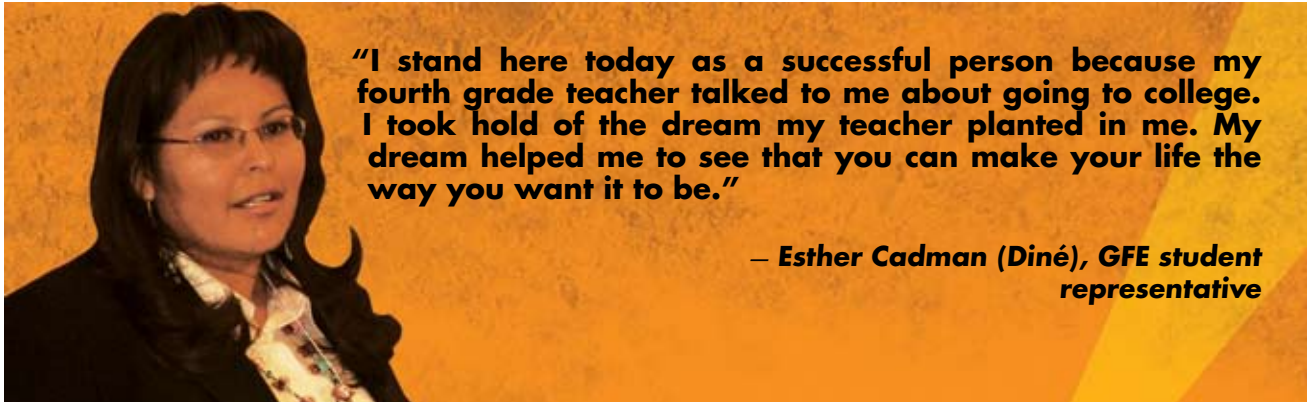
Provide funds to assess the impact of language programs and cultural curricula on academic achievement. Support dissemination of findings.

Reward model programs that have successfully demonstrated improved outcomes as a result of combining culture, language and community with academic rigor.

Support educational policies that provide adequate funding for culture-based education and do not sacrifice the role of culture and language in the classroom in the name of standardized testing.

Teacher Training

Support programs that recruit and retain high-quality teachers in underserved schools serving large American Indian populations.



TEACHER TRAINING IN INDIAN COUNTRY AT A GLANCE

Having American Indian role models in the classroom increases the desire of Native students to remain in school (Manuelito, 2003).

Native people only comprise 0.4 percent of individuals currently teaching and 1 percent of individuals enrolled in teacher training programs (Pavel et al., 2003).

In BIA and tribal schools, only 38 percent of teachers are Native. In non-tribal schools with high Indian enrollment, only 15 percent of teachers are Native (Pavel et al., 2003).

Teacher turnover rates in reservation schools are high. The average stay in many Native schools is only one or two years (Peacock, 2006).

Two million new teachers will be needed in the next decade to replace retiring teachers and meet the needs of a growing Indian student population (Roma, 2000).

Indian educators firmly believe that one strategy to improving the academic success of Native students is to increase the number of teachers who are properly trained to teach Native learners (Pavel, et al., 2003). Teachers have a powerful, life-long impact on the lives of their students. Furthermore, research indicates that American Indian teachers have a profound influence on the success of Native students. Teachers are more aware of the needs and learning styles of their students when they share the same language and culture. As a result, they can effectively tailor their teaching styles to provide students with a much richer learning experience (Manuelito, 2003).

Confirming the influence of American Indian teachers (or the lack thereof), GFE student representative Stephen Yellowhawk decided to become a teacher after observing that there were few male American Indian teachers and role models growing up on the Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota. Yellowhawk believes that “we need more Native American teachers in the school system to inspire and support our Native youth” (American Indian College Fund, 2006).

Schools on rural reservations have difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers. GFE presenter Karen Swisher, former president of Haskell Indian Nations University, commented on how non-reservation schools offer higher salaries and heavily recruit Native teachers even before they receive their teaching degrees. Indeed, reservation schools are in dire need of resources to offer competitive salaries and benefits to potential hires.

Native people have adopted a “grow your own” mentality to address the severe lack of Indian teachers. In particular, tribal colleges and universities have assumed much of the responsibility in developing and implementing Native teacher preparation programs. Programs at these institutions have led to an increase in the number of American Indian teaching assistants and teachers in reservation settings. Although tribal colleges and universities have worked hard to strengthen the Native teaching force, resources are greatly needed to expand these efforts and to support other Native teacher education programs.

STRATEGIES FOR GRANTMAKERS

Provide stipends to aspiring teachers while they are student teaching. Many Native students do not select teaching as a career path because student teaching positions are unpaid.

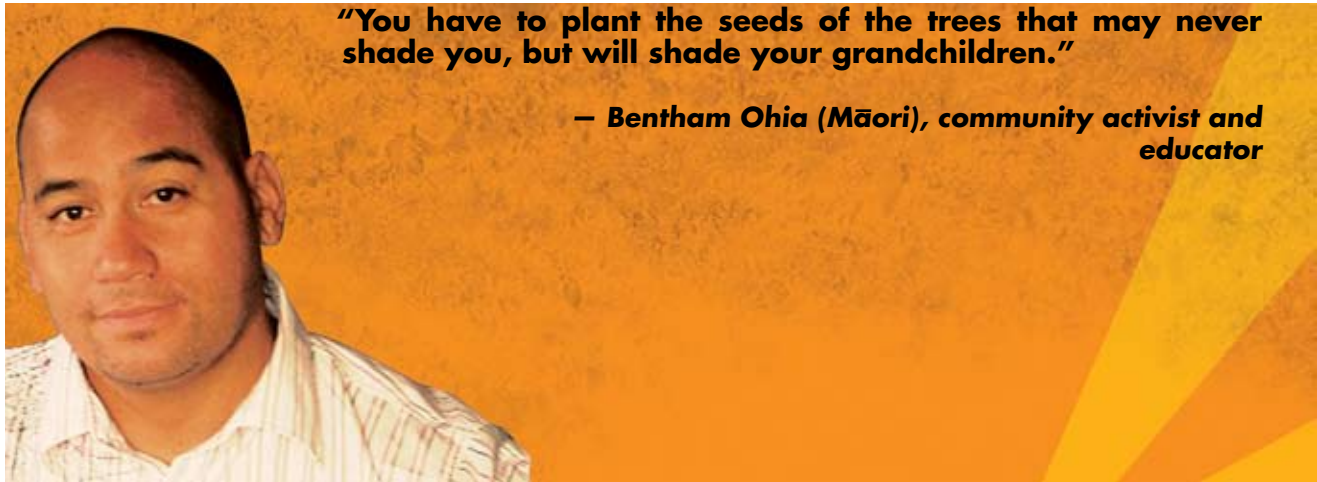
Provide funds for students to take teaching credential examinations, as test fees are expensive for Native students.

Fund recruitment plans to increase the number of students enrolled in Native teacher training programs. Recruitment efforts at Diné College resulted in a threefold increase in the number of applicants (Pavel, 2003).

Offer resources to allow for the expansion of middle and high school teacher training programs at tribal colleges and universities. This may include funds for teacher resource centers and libraries.

Offer support to Native teaching assistants from the community to complete two-year and four-year teacher certifications.

Conclusions and Final Considerations



After centuries of misguided policies aimed at using education as a means to assimilate Native people, Indian education is now in the early stages of a new era of self-determination and success. Recognizing the need for local control by tribal communities and the essential role Native culture must hold in the classroom, Native educators are making inroads into redefining what education means to Native communities. Education is no longer marked by the painful memories of the past. Instead, it is the means by which Indian Country can regain its vitality once again.

It is no coincidence that the renaissance experienced in Indian education over the last thirty years has coincided with increased interest and support from the philanthropic community. As is often the case, private philanthropic institutions have led the charge for social change while policymakers and others have eventually followed suit.

We recognize the challenges of addressing needs in Indian Country. With a diversity that spans over 560 federally-recognized tribes that have experienced a long history of injurious policies that must be undone, improving Native education is not a charge to be taken lightly. Therefore, we commend the commitment of those convened at the Grantmakers for Education member briefing, and hope the recommendations presented here will assist philanthropy's efforts in helping our people.

Resources for Further Research

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