RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS:

NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY GAP STUDY IN WASHINGTON STATE

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OSPI Tribal Education Leaders Convening with Superintendent Reykdal at WSU - Photo Credit: Zoe Higheagle Strong

Opening Words From a Valued and Respected Elder, Dr. Patricia Whitefoot

Dr. Patricia "Patsy" Whitefoot (Twapat), a citizen of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, is an elder and has served as an educator over the past 50 years focusing on Native education. She was asked to provide opening words for this report.

"Over the past 50 years of serving in Native education—from grassroots efforts like revitalizing our traditional ways of teaching and learning, such as the Iksiks Washana'lama or 'Little Swans' Dancers, to leadership roles at the Tribal, state, regional, and federal levels—I have come to believe that our children need holistic, interdisciplinary, and culturally grounded education. Our children must experience the joy of learning, and they cannot do this in isolation. They need their language, culture, and support for their overall health and wellbeing. This is how our people have always learned to survive—and it's why we are still here today.

This Native American Education Opportunity Gap Study is important because it can serve as a bridge—connecting to other Native education reports across the state, region, and nation. Many of us share the same vision, but we are not always communicating and working on the same goals. That is our challenge.

We need stronger communication and collaboration—strategic efforts that genuinely impact our schools and communities at the local level—and those efforts must be shared and integrated at the state, regional, and federal levels. If we are truly working toward Tribal self-sufficiency, Tribal sovereignty, and strong Tribal–state relationships, our collective work and knowledge must be brought together!

Tribal leadership is essential in guiding this process and helping us prioritize and guide our shared goals. We also need our schools, administrators, and educators to respectfully partner with Tribal government and education leaders to move this work forward—collectively and strategically."

Patricia Whitefoot - Photo Credit: Zoe Higheagle Strong

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Gratitude, Appreciation, and Acknowledgement

We begin this report by expressing our deepest gratitude to our Tribal elders, leaders, and educators for their resilience, sacrifice, and the collective knowledge they have passed down. We also thank our allies in education who invest in advocacy for Native education.

As we present this report, we want readers to know it is the result of voices that came together in a short period of time to speak on behalf of our Native American children. We are humbled to have undertaken this work and concerned about the voices that were left out. We hope this report is a living document that gathers more listening opportunities, and we deeply apologize to those who were not included. We also express our gratitude to all those who gathered with expertise and wisdom.

Please take the time to review this entire report with an open mind and heart. We realize that many more voices deserve to share their perspectives and that we may not have perfectly interpreted those who did share. We did our best as a team within our given short period of time and hope this serves as a springboard for ongoing evaluation of how to better serve Native American students in Washington state.

We thank the following people who contributed to the listening sessions, interviews, writing, and feedback sessions. Others who paved the trail in Native Education work should also be noted.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to the following people, committees, and OSPI departments for their contributions to our work:

Dr. Angel Sobotta, Aly Stensgar, Andy Joseph, Jr., Anna Armstrong, Annette Timentwa, Barry (sʔulustú) Moses, Bawaajigekwe Boulley, Bernie Thomas, Honorable Chairman Bill Iyall, Brandon Morris, Brenda Guerrero, Brenda Whalawitsa , Brendan Iyall, Brian Freeman, Casey Wynecoop, Dr. Cathy Calvert, Chanelle John, Cindy Kelly, Cosette Terry-itewaste, Ph.D., Craig Hill, Honorable Representative Deborah Lekanoff, Daniel Brown, Debbie Flett, Denise Crowe, Denny Hurtado, Destiney Petty, Dora Apodaca, Dr. Chris Meyer, Dr. Elese Washines, Dr. Kenneth Olden, Elizabeth LaFeber, Elizabeth Martin, Elsie David, Eric Wyand, Ezilda Winnier, Felicia Pichette, Dr. Francine Watson, Gail Morris, Gordon James, Gregory Sutterlict, Henry Strom, iisaaksiichaa Ross Braine, Jennifer LeBret, Jerad Koepp, Jerry Price, Jessica Bustad, Jessica Egnew, Joan Banker, Joelle Edwards, Jolene Grimes, Joseph Martin, Joyce McFarland, Julie Johnson, Justine Koble, Kady Titus, Karly Gomez, Katherine Lawrence, Katy Wolf, Kay Turner, Keegan Livermore, Kendra Crowshoe, Dr. Kenov H. Lokensgard, Kristen Colpitts, Dr. Laura Lynn,, Leah Dick, Honorable Chairman Leonard Forsman, Lisa Sheldon, Honorable Councilwoman Lisa Wilson, Maria Pascua, Marjorie James, Dr. Michael Pavel, Michael Vendiola, Michelle Parkin, Monica Jack, Dr. Naomi Bender, Dr. Patsy Whitefoot, Rebecca Purser, Regan Anderson, Richard Palmer, Sally Brownfield, Sara Marie Ortiz, Sarah Houseberg, Dr. Shana Brown, Honorable Senator Claudia Kauffman, Shana Brown, Shandy Abrahamson, Shannon Rosenbaum, Sharon Mail Kanichy, Dr. Sarah Shears, Siena Lopez-Johnston, Tammy James, Terri Parr, Honorable Councilwoman Theresa Sheldon, Tim Reynon, Toni Jones, Honorable Councilman Tyson Johnston, Honorable Councilwoman Virginia Cross, Velma Brehm, Virginia Morales, Waylon Michel, Willard Bill, Willie Frank, III, Roma Call, Jesse McMahan, Jakeb Hoyle, Aaron Brooks.

We also thank the Office of Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI) Office of Native Education (ONE), OSPI Government Relations Office, OSPI ONE Washington State Native American Education Advisory Committee (WSNEAC) members, OSPI ONE Native Literacy and Tribal Language Convening participants, OSPI ONE Tribal Education Leaders Convening participants, State-Tribal Education Compact Schools (STEC) leaders and Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Education Subcommittee for their contributions to this work!

Relationships, Relationships, Relationships Report Overview

The 2008, the *From Where the Sun Rises: Addressing the Educational Achievement of Native Americans in Washington State* Report was originally commissioned because Tribal and education leaders in the state of Washington were very concerned about the ongoing achievement gap between Native and non-Native students. The report examined the educational achievement gap between American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students and other student groups in Washington state and highlighted the importance of integrating tribal culture and history, including language, into the education system to improve outcomes for Native American students.

As part of state appropriations for fiscal year 2024-25, Washington State Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA), subcontracted Washington State University's (WSU) Office of Tribal Relations and Center for Native American Research and Collaboration to conduct an updated analysis of the educational opportunity gap for Native American students in Washington State (objectives outlined in State Proviso Section 121.2.a.).

1. Conduct a detailed analysis of the opportunity gap for AI/AN students in Washington State.
2. Assess progress in government-to-government collaboration and curriculum development under RCW 28A.345.070.
3. Develop initial recommendations for closing the educational opportunity gap while ensuring compliance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated Plan.
4. Identify performance measures to track adequate yearly progress in AI/AN student achievement.
5. Submit a final report to the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee, the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Board of Education, and the legislative education committees.

Due to various leadership changes at the state level, WSU did not receive the executed contract until March 28, 2025, near the end of the biennium. Given the limited timeframe before the June 30, 2025, reporting deadline, WSU subcontracted subject matter experts in the field to join their project team and utilized existing tribal education leadership meetings to gather robust feedback on the study design, as well as the evaluation of progress and gaps.

"Tribal leaders, educators, community members, and allies consistently rally in support of our Native American students when called upon. Our project team is deeply grateful for the many individuals who went above and beyond—welcoming us into educational spaces, participating in listening sessions and interviews, sharing invaluable content, contributing to the writing process, and offering thoughtful, detailed reflections on the history of Native education. Their insights were grounded in strength, hope, practicality, and deep knowledge. Although the timeline was short, the richness of the content reflects the unwavering commitment, investment, and generosity of our Tribal communities. We offer our heartfelt thanks."

- DR. ZOE HIGHEAGLE STRONG, STUDY LEAD

Zoe Higheagle Strong

The study was led by the Washington State University's (WSU) Office of Tribal Relations and the Center for Native American Research and Collaboration (CNRC), both directed by Dr. Zoe Higheagle Strong (Nez Perce). The Office and Center work collectively to uphold WSU's trust responsibilities to Tribal Nations through efforts that support AI/AN student recruitment, retention, and graduation; foster respectful Tribal-university partnerships; and advance Indigenous research methodologies that honor Tribal sovereignty, knowledge systems, and community-defined priorities.

- Dr. Zoe Higheagle Strong, Indian Name Hookoo, (Nimiipuu, Nez Perce), Ph.D., Vice Provost and Tribal Liaison to the President. Associate Professor in Educational Psychology, College of Education
- Dr. Michael M. Munson (Séliš, Q̓ispé, & other ancestries), Ed.D., Associate Vice Provost and Director of the Center for Native American Research and Collaboration
- Dr. Stephany RunningHawk Johnson (Oglala Lakota), Ph.D., Assistant Professor in Cultural Studies and Social Thought, College of Education
- Cary Rosenbaum (Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation), PhC, Tribal Specialist, Office of Tribal Relations
- Dr. Sequoia Dance (Shoshone-Bannock), Ph.D., Program Coordinator for Tribal Nation Building Leadership Program and BIORISE, Center for Native American Research and Collaboration
- Alianna Cash (Nez Perce), M.Ed., Doctoral Student in Cultural Studies and Social Thought, College of Education and Research Assistant for Center for Native American Research and Collaboration

In alignment with guidance from Tribal leaders and educators, Dr. Higheagle Strong invited the following subject matter experts to join the study team to contribute to writing study sections. Subject Matter Experts Co-Authors brought both lived experience and deep expertise to the study:

- Dr. Laura Lynn (Chickasaw descendant), Assistant Director, Office of Native Education/OSPI; Retired
- Dr. Kenneth Olden (Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation), Director of Assessment and Data, Wapato School District
- Bernie Thomas (Lummi Nation), Interim Executive Director, Office of Native Education/OSPI; Retired
- Dr. Elese Washines (Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation), Ph.D., Education Manager, Yakama Nation
- Dr. Anna Hernandez French, Policy and Implementation Manager, Government Relations, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Maxine Alex (Diné), Tribal Consultation Program Supervisor, Office of Native Education, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Joan Banker, Administrative Program Specialist, Office of Native Education/OSPI; Retired

Their collaboration was essential to ensuring the study reflects the priorities, values, and experiences of Native communities across Washington State.

This current study builds upon the foundational 2008 report led by Dr. Michael Pavel (ChiXapkaid) and colleagues, *From Where the Sun Rises: Addressing the Educational Achievement of Native American Students in Washington State* which was funded through a Washington State Proviso sponsored by Senator Claudia Kauffman. Its purpose was to document opportunity gaps, highlight persistent disparities, and recommend strategies for meaningful improvement rooted in Tribal perspectives and sovereignty. As a key component of the current study, we examine the extent to which Washington state has narrowed the educational opportunity gap since the 2008 report. We begin with an overview of that foundational study to provide an essential context for the present objectives.

Looking Back, *From Where the Sun Rises* Report Brief Overview

VISION: “Indian education dates back to a time when all children were identified as gifted and talented. Each child had a skill and ability that would contribute to the health and vitality of the community. Everyone in the community was expected and trained to be a teacher to identify and cultivate these skills and abilities. The elders were entrusted to oversee this sacred act of knowledge being shared. That is our vision for Indian education today.” (*From Where the Sun Rises* Report, 2008)
The 2008 report led by Dr. Michael Pavel and colleagues at Washington State University, "F*rom Where the Sun Rises: Addressing the Educational Achievement of Native American Students in Washington State*," stemmed from the response of Native American education leaders, educators, and families recognizing the disparity in the achievement gap between Native and non-Native students, as well as the lack of transparent educational data rendering Native students "invisible" in policies and evidence-based practices.

The statewide study examines systemic factors contributing to the persistent educational achievement gap for Native American students in Washington state. Central to the study is the analysis of government-to-government relationships between Tribes and school districts, specifically the implementation of RCW 28A.345.070, which requires the inclusion of tribal history, culture, and governance curriculum in public schools. Additionally, the study focuses on the development of culturally responsive performance measures aligned with Native definitions of achievement and success. The study sought to understand:

1. **To what extent is the education system in Washington addressing the needs of NA students?**
2. **What data is needed to understand the achievement gap better?**
3. **What are the characteristics of exemplary programs and practices serving the needs of NA students?**
4. **What are the recommendations of key stakeholders to close the achievement gap?**

The study employed a four-phase approach, reviewing data from the 1928 Meriam Report through the mid-2000s, incorporating Washington's multicultural learning objectives, Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs), and existing research on Native education. It identified significant data gaps, engaged extensively with Native communities through listening sessions, and documented the perspectives of elders, educators, students, and families.

The report concludes that the achievement gap reflects broader systemic challenges rather than student deficiencies and calls for comprehensive structural reforms. While acknowledging recent progress, including the adoption of the John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial (JMLSTI) curriculum and increasing state recognition of tribal sovereignty, the report underscores the need for sustained government-to-government collaboration, culturally grounded pedagogy, robust data systems, and state investment in Native education initiatives that address not only academic outcomes but also overall holistic health and wellbeing of Native American students.

The highly detailed report submitted to the state legislature resulted in the following five overarching recommendations:

1. Shift Paradigm Through Relationship Building Between Tribes and Schools: the paradigm through relationship building between schools and Native American Tribes or Indian education programs, leading to the integration of Native language, culture, and history into the public school system.
2. Provide Resources for Pre- and In-Service Educators and Stakeholders: Train educators with the knowledge, skills, and cultural competencies to serve Native American students and communities effectively.
3. Improve Data Collection and Reporting: Identify and build better data systems with Native Student-centered indicators to inform policy and practice, thereby enhancing student learning.
4. Partner with the National Education Association (NEA). Utilize NEA resources to assist in developing culturally competent education systems.
5. Increase State Support and Collaboration: Recognizing our Native American children as our most valuable resource, expand resources in the Office of Indian Education and related programs to address the achievement gap.

In conclusion, Dr. Pavel and colleagues highlighted the vital importance of ensuring the educational system:

- Recognize and honor Native language, culture, and history as essential to Native American student achievement.
- Develop and implement holistic approaches that include health, emotional, cultural, and academic support are necessary.
- Answer the urgent call for state leaders to invest in sustainable solutions that respect tribal sovereignty and ensure the educational success of Native American students.

The *From Where the Sun Rises* Report was seminal in directing the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's Office of Native Education (ONE) to develop actionable goals to establish and improve statewide educational policies, practices, and programs to better serve Native American students and communities. Numerous educators and policymakers have leveraged these key findings to inform their work and enhance Native American education. Progress has been evident since the 2008 report; however, there has not been an extensive follow-up study. Therefore, this current study serves as another investment from Tribal communities and Washington State to analyze the educational opportunity gap for Native American students.

The purpose of this study is to collaboratively assess the current state of Native American education in Washington state through a culturally grounded, Indigenous mixed research approach that centers on Native American knowledge systems and Tribal sovereignty. In partnership with Tribal leaders, educators, and subject-matter experts, the study builds upon and examines the progress made since the 2008 "From Where the Sun Rises" report on tribal- and state-initiated and invested education reform while also identifying educational opportunity gaps and examining them.

The study also examines government-to-government consultation practices, key legislation, and policy developments, such as the JMLSTI and the First People's Language, Culture, and Oral Tradition Certificate, as well as curriculum development and language and cultural revitalization efforts. The resulting findings include actionable recommendations that will guide future research and policy development to strengthen the state's educational trust responsibility to Native students and communities, ensure alignment with state and federal academic achievement indicators, and respect Tribal educational self-determination.

Due to the current contract's late execution on March 28, 2025—near the conclusion of the biennium—the scope of this study was necessarily limited to a primarily qualitative assessment, with a limited focus on quantitative assessment within the Native American student identification and data section. The five primary objectives with associated sub-questions are as follows:

Objective 1: Evaluate Progress Since the 2008 *From Where the Sun Rises* Report

- What have been the most impactful changes in Native education in your community or statewide since 2008?
- Which policies, programs, or legislation have led to meaningful progress or challenges? Why?
- What additional policies, programs, or legislation are needed to improve Native education? (Please share your recommendations.)

Objective 2: Assess Government-to-Government Collaboration and RCW 28A.345.070 Implementation

- How would you describe current relationships between your Tribe(s) and local school districts?
- What actions would strengthen these partnerships?

Objective 3: Evaluate Implementation of the John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial (JMLSTI) Curriculum

- What have been the significant impact of JMLSTI legislation and curriculum?
- Where is implementation successful?
- Where are districts falling short in meeting their obligations? What improvements are needed?

Objective 4: Analyze Language and Cultural Education Efforts

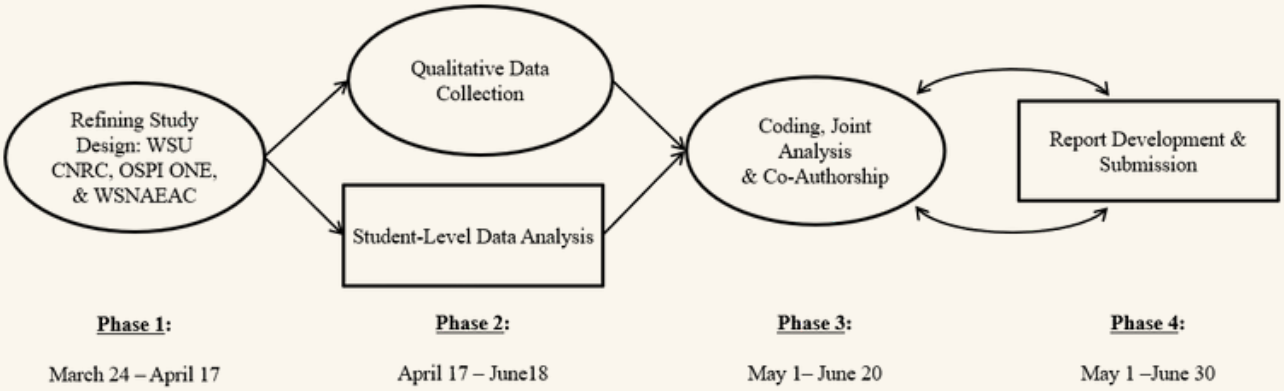
- What progress has been made in language and culture education and revitalization efforts?
- What professional development, training, and credentialing are needed to strengthen language and culture teachers?

Objective 5: Address the Educational Opportunity Gap

- What strategies and recommendations can help close the educational opportunity gap while aligning with the state's ESSA Consolidated Plan?

Approaches and Methodology of Our Study

WSU utilized an Indigenous Parallel Mixed Methods Model (Cresswell, J., & Plano Clark, V., 2018; Kovach, 2009; Walter, M., & Anderson, C., 2013.), incorporating qualitative data collection, Indigenous knowledge systems, and reciprocal engagement.



Four Study Phase Approach

The research team employed a four-phase process to gather feedback from Tribal leaders, educators, and subject matter experts on the study's goals and objectives.

Phase 1: Co-Creation of Study Design

The project team consulted with Tribal leaders, educators, and OSPI Office of Native Education staff at key convenings, including:

- OSPI Native American Education Advisory Board (March 31, 2025)
- Washington State Indian Education Association Conference (April 1-3, 2025)
- Native American Advisory Board at WSU (April 11, 2025)
- OSPI ONE Tribal Leaders Education Summit (April 16–18, 2025)
- Feedback from these meetings informed the refinement of the study design, evaluation priorities, and questions, the identification of key individuals to interview, and the selection of exemplary programs for an inclusion in the study. Through this process, we also identified our co-authors, that are subject matter experts.

Phase 2: Data Collection and Management

- Tribal leaders, education leaders, and subject matter experts were invited via email or verbal announcement to attend general statewide listening sessions, as well as topical listening sessions (i.e., JMLSTI, Policy and Legislation, Language and Culture Education, STEC Schools) via Zoom. The project team held 14 listening sessions. Some participants chose to engage in an individual interview via Zoom or telephone.
- Project leads conducted listening sessions with Tribal Leaders, educators, and subject-matter experts at convenings, including the OSPI ONE Braiding Knowledge Systems Conference and the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) Mid-Year Convention.
- A synergistic conversation style (Kovach, 2009)—grounded in the principles of storytelling, reciprocal dialogue, and collaborative knowledge construction—was used to guide the listening sessions and garner feedback on the study's research questions (see Appendix A for the sample script). The script provided a brief overview of the study, obtained recording permissions, and included opening prompts aligned with the core research questions. Participants often built upon one another's responses, naturally steering the conversation toward the topics they found most relevant or meaningful. As a result, most sessions addressed all key themes without the project team needing to pose each question directly.
- The study team recorded listening sessions and conducted interviews via Zoom, collecting participant-designed posters, written responses, and field notes. They securely stored all materials in a protected OneDrive folder, accessible only to the study team.
- The study team uploaded all Recommendations from the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) Reports in ATLAS.ti for document analysis.
- The coding team downloaded and cleaned the Zoom transcripts and created transcripts from posters and typed field notes. They then uploaded all transcripts into ATLAS.ti, a secure qualitative analysis software, to begin the next phase of coding.

Phase 3: Qualitative Coding, Joint Analysis, and Co-Authorship

- The research team coded and themed contributions from listening sessions, conversations, and document analysis using ATLAS.ti. Following a two-cycle approach (Saldaña, 2013), the team first applied structural and descriptive coding to organize the data in alignment with the research questions and topics identified through initial co-design conversations. In the second cycle, the coding team conducted an inductive thematic analysis to generate themes (see Appendix B for a list of codes).
- The analysis process preserved the original narratives and conversational structures to uphold Indigenous knowledge-sharing traditions.
- The invited co-authors also contributed to this study by writing report sections based on their personal research, academic and professional expertise, as well as their lived commitment to advancing Native education and Tribal sovereignty.
- The coding team conducted the thematic analysis to ensure alignment with participants' voices and perspectives. They assisted authors in integrating quotes and generated themes throughout all sections of the study.

Phase 4: Report Development and Submission

- The project team held regular meetings to review emerging themes, reflect on the findings from listening sessions, and collaboratively draft report sections.
- Co-authors collaboratively wrote each section of the report to reflect participant voices and honor Tribal perspectives.
- The final report will be submitted to the Governor's Office, OSPI, the State Board of Education, the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee, legislative education committees, and Tribal communities to inform future work.

To fully support the success of our Native children, youth, families, and communities we collaborate across many tribal and non-tribal spaces: education, social services, legislative, and many more. Anywhere we go, we encounter acronyms. Throughout this report you will find the use of acronyms. We have been careful to write the name of the organization, department, or resource before using an acronym. However, we wanted to offer a guide and encourage you to make a copy for your use as you read, review, and reflect on this report.

List of Common Acronyms

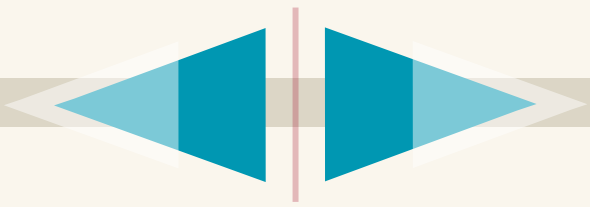
Welcome to Native education! It's not real until there's an acronym!

ACEs	Adverse childhood experiences
ACS	American Community Survey
AESD	Association of Educational Service Districts
AI/AN	American Indian and Alaska Native
AIR	American Institute of Research
ATNI	The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, an organization consisting of 57 tribes in the Pacific Northwest
AWSP	Association of Washington School Principals
BIA	The Bureau of Indian Affairs
BIE	The Bureau of Indian Education
BTW	Between Two Worlds Swinomish Curriculum
CDC	The Center for Disease Control and Prevention
CISL	The Center for the Improvement of Student Learning, part of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.
CNRC	The Center for Native American Research and Collaboration at Washington State University
CPR	Comprehensive Programs Review
CRRSA	Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations
CTE	Career and Technical Education
DCYF	Department of Children, Youth, and Families
DOH	Department of Health
DOI	The Department of the Interior

EALRs	Essential Academic Learning Requirements
ED	The United States Department of Education
EGMS	The Electronic Grant Management System
ELA	English Language Arts
EOGOAC	The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee, established in Washington in 2009 by the Washington State Legislature
ESD	Educational Service District
ESSA	The Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), which replaced No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
ESSER	Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund
FPLCOT	First Peoples' Language, Culture, and Oral Traditions Certificate
G2G	Government-to-Government relations
GOIA	The Governor's Office of Indian Affairs in the state of Washington
HB	House Bill
HCA	Health Care Authority
HOC	Healing of the Canoe Curriculum
IESLN	The Indigenous Education State Leaders Network
IPP	Indian Policies and Procedures

ISI	Indigenous Student Identification
JMLSTI	The John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial tribal sovereignty curriculum
JOM	The Johnson-O'Malley Program
LAP	Learning Assistance Program
LEA	The Local Education Agency
MBL	Mastery-based learning
MOU	The memorandum of understanding
NEA	The National Educators Association
NNCTC	The National Native Child Trauma Center
OEO	The Office of the Education Ombuds
OMAD	The Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity at the University of Washington
OMB	The Office of Management and Budget
ONE	The Office of Native Education, located in the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
OSPI	The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction in Washington state
PESB	The Professional Educator Standards Board of Washington
RCW	Revised Code of Washington

SB	Senate Bill
SBA	Smarter Balanced Assessments
SBCTC	State Board of Community and Technical Colleges
SBE	State Board of Education
SEL	Social emotional learning
SSAE	Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants
STC	Strengthening Tribal Consultation
STECs	State-Tribal Education Compact Schools in Washington
TPPs	Teacher Preparation Programs
UW	University of Washington
WACTA	Washington Association of Career and Technical Education Directors and Administrators
WASA	Washington Association of School Administrators
WSIF	The Washington School Improvement Framework
WSNAEAC	Washington State Native American Education Advisory Committee
WSSDA	The Washington State School Directors' Association
WSU	Washington State University



Overview of The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) Recommendations 2014-2025

The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) was established under RCW 28A.300.136 to synthesize findings and recommendations from the 2008 achievement gap studies into a comprehensive implementation plan. Five studies were commissioned to analyze the state of education for Native American, Hispanic, Black, Asian American, and Pacific Islander students in Washington State. Unfortunately, the studies found that students from many of these groups are "overrepresented in measures such as school disciplinary sanctions, failure to meet state academic standards, failure to graduate, enrollment in special education, and underperforming schools" (RCW 28A.300.136). Conversely, they found a disproportionate number of students not enrolled "in advanced placement courses, honors programs, and college preparatory classes" (RCW 28A.300.136). The studies revealed significant gaps in educational outcomes related to race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The study, *From Where the Sun Rises:* Addressing the Educational Achievement of Native Americans in Washington State (Pavel and Colleagues, 2008) informed the EOGOAC's policy and strategy recommendations aimed at closing the achievement gap.

The EOGOAC includes chairs and ranking minority members of the House and Senate Education Committees or their designees, one additional House member appointed by the Speaker of the House and one additional Senate member appointed by the President of the Senate, a representative from the Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO), a representative from the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL) in the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), a representative of federally-recognized Indian Tribes within Washington State designated by the tribes, and four members appointed by the Governor, in consultation with state ethnic commissions, representing African-Americans, Latino/a Americans, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islander Americans. Throughout the past 17 years, including the 11 years of public reports from 2014 to 2025 made available on its website, the EOGOAC has continued to analyze, strategize, and operationalize recommendations to improve the opportunity gap.

This year, the Washington State Legislature funded the ethnic commissions and the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA) to conduct a detailed analysis of opportunity gaps for diverse student communities in 2023, as a continuation of the achievement gap studies that led to the creation of the EOGOAC. Washington State University was fortunate to receive a subcontract to address the educational opportunity gap for Native American students in Washington State. The project team expresses their gratitude and acknowledges the valuate work of the EOGOAC for advocating for Native American students. Therefore, we will highlight some key contributions and recommendations drawn from a document analysis of all 11 reports (2014-2025).

The Evolution of Recommendations and Priorities

Throughout the history of publicly available EOGOAC reports, analysis has revealed themes pertinent to recommendations, including the following: disaggregating data, cultural competency, language endorsements, mental and behavioral health, attendance, accountability, equity/access, gap research, homelessness, and WISSP. Data on Native students highlighted issues in reading and math gaps (separating low-income and non-low-income students), statewide reading gaps, student discipline rates, behaviors leading to suspensions and expulsions, graduation pathway completion rates, ELA proficiency rates, and dropout rates. Overall, the data indicated that Native students are the most negatively impacted racial group. The reports also showed a lack of support for Native students, including a shortage of teachers and school counselors of color, and challenges in retaining teachers of color.

2014–2016: Reducing Suspensions and Expulsions

- One top priority was the reduction of suspensions and expulsions among marginalized students. Reports centered on the implementation of increased accountability measures for schools and districts to address disciplinary practices that affect students of color at disproportionate rates — with Native American students being the most likely to receive expulsions and third most likely to receive long-term suspensions.
- During this time, Fourth Substitute House Bill 1541 implemented student discipline reform. The reductions of suspensions and expulsions were prioritized by the creation of a discipline task force and the elimination of indefinite expulsions authorized by RCW 28A.600.490.

2014-2018: Cultural Competencies

- Integrating policies and educational practices to improve cultural competency and language was prioritized to better connect with diverse populations. Mandating cultural competence training for educators at all levels and requiring cultural competency in professional development plans for schools under improvement were two measures recommended.
- Fourth Substitute House Bill 1541 specifically states that “information regarding best practices to implement the tribal history and culture curriculum” are to be included as part of cultural competency trainings with Superintendents and School Board members (Sec. 201), Principals, Administrators, and Teachers (Sec 202.3).

2020: Elevating Social Emotional Learning (SEL) as a Top Priority

- The COVID-19 pandemic worsened existing inequities, prompting a re-evaluation of EOGOAC's strategies to ensure equitable educational access for all students.
- The EOGOAC recommended using SEL to enhance schools' understanding of the behavior of students of color without bias. It also suggested fostering collaboration between PESB and OSPI, along with the Social Emotional Learning Advisory Committee, to integrate SEL Benchmarks and Indicators. This would ensure alignment with standards for students in public schools and educators in colleges of education in Washington state.

2021: Addressing Institutional Racism

- EOGOAC then focused on institutional racism in 2021 and the need for comprehensive changes in educational practices. It urged schools to build an inclusive and supportive environment for all students and educators, including developing equitable policies, integrating ethnic studies, and creating robust antiracist SEL initiatives. These needs would be met with ongoing monitoring and community engagement.

2022: School Board Leadership & Representation

- The school board leadership's role in the opportunity gap was the top priority in 2022, following the passage of Senate Bill 5044, which required the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) to create and provide a governance training program aligned with cultural competency diversity, equity, and inclusion standards. The EOGOAC raised concerns regarding the lack of diversity and representation on school boards in the state.

2023: Recruiting and Retaining Educators of Color

- Hiring teachers of color was one of the most explored recommendations throughout the life of the EOGOAC. Enhancing recruitment, hiring, and retention of educators of color became the top priorities in 2023. This recommendation emphasized the importance of creating a workforce that reflects the demographics of students, fostering an environment where all students can thrive.

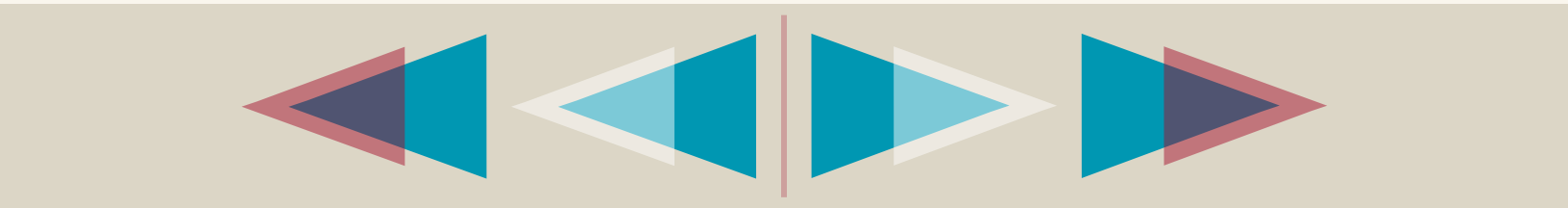
2024: Mastery-Based Learning (MBL):

- Mastery-based learning (MBL), initially introduced as a recommendation in 2021, came to the forefront in 2024, with the EOGOAC emphasizing the need to treat students as individuals, allowing them to learn at their own pace and tailoring educational experiences to their unique needs as being vitally important to closing the opportunity gap for students of color.

2017-2025: Family and Community Engagement

- First emphasized in the 2017 EOGOAC recommendation. The Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) includes strategies for culturally responsive, authentic family and community engagement, as well as implementing cultural competency enhancements for current and future educators.
- The recommendations aimed to strengthen the partnership between schools, families, and communities, ensuring all students, particularly those from diverse backgrounds, received the appropriate support and engagement necessary for their success.

The 2025 report contained a total of 19 recommendations, by far the most recommendations of any year since the EOGOAC began making them.



Future Work

The educational opportunity gap remains prevalent, highlighting the need for coordinated systemic accountability throughout Washington's education system. The EOGOAC continues to push forward, focusing on future work to address the evolving needs of communities of color. The current focus of our report is specifically on Native American students and communities; however, we believe we can also be deemed beneficial for all students. Effective change requires collaboration among education agencies and a commitment to long-term efforts. The EOGOAC remains dedicated to advocating for marginalized students' rights, ensuring today's education system meets their needs without requiring assimilation or upholding privilege and systemic racism.

In its latest report, the EOGOAC stated, "Students and families of color report uncertainty and fear for their future, given the increased targeting of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and the erosion of their civil rights by the Trump administration. Schools must continue to be safe places that celebrate and protect the civil rights of every student and uphold the fundamental Constitutional right to equal protection under the law as enshrined in the 14th Amendment. Beyond safety, schools are sites of collective liberation and empowerment that can address the generational effects of segregation and racist laws. The EOGOAC remains steadfast in ensuring our students of color receive an equitable public education."

Centering Language and Culture: Pathways to Tribal Educational Sovereignty and Self-Determination

In Washington State, there are 29 federally-recognized tribes, along with five additional tribes whose ancestral and current lands extend into the state, where some of their descendants currently reside. The conservation and revitalization of tribal culture and language fluency among tribal members are essential for preserving Native identities, histories, and worldviews. Many thanks to the tribal language-speaking leaders, who have conserved tribal languages despite incredible odds against them.

To fully understand the distinct definitions of each Tribe, including their cultures, languages, and dialects, specialized insights must be gathered through collaborative consultations with each Tribal Nation. This process should be complemented by advocacy for changes to laws, administrative rules, and judicial decisions to align with the treaty rights and inherent rights of the Tribes.

Joe Hillaire (Lummi), Language speaker and carver,
Founder of Children of the Setting Sun

American Indian tribal sovereignty, which includes the inherent right of each tribal nation to educate its children with a focus on fluency in their tribal languages and cultural knowledge systems, is currently not fully realized. Efforts to implement tribal education initiatives for their members are hindered by federal education requirements. Funding is tied to laws, administrative rules, and judicial rulings that primarily prioritize English language learning outcomes as measured by standardized test scores associated with accountability measures. This is exacerbated by the fact that funding sources often require competition between tribal entities for resources.

Traditional American Indian education differs significantly from public school education systems in various ways, reflecting distinct cultural values, teaching methodologies, community involvement, and education aimed at increasing language fluency and cultural enrichment with and for the multiple Tribes in and surrounding the State of Washington. As a result, the following discussion is intended to be illustrative rather than definitive. The differences highlighted between traditional American Indian education and public-school education systems are meant to showcase general trends and characteristics, acknowledging that there is significant diversity among tribes and educational practices. Each tribe has its own unique cultural context, practices, and approaches to education that can vary widely. Moreover, public school systems also differ significantly based on local policies, resources, and community engagement.

Perpetuating Our Peoples' Fullest Potential: Culture and Language (Fluency) Education in Washington State

Tribal cultures, rich in traditions, stories, and ceremonies are held within their languages and foster a sense of belonging and continuity within Tribal communities. They encapsulate unique knowledge systems and practices that have been passed down through generations, connecting individuals to their ancestors and the land itself. Fluency in Language serves as a vital vessel for cultural heritage, encapsulating nuances of identity, belief systems, and ways of life that are often untranslatable into other languages. The loss of a language can lead to the erosion of cultural knowledge, traditions, and social structures, making its conservation imperative not only for cultural sustainability but for the overall well-being of Tribal Nations. Revitalizing tribal languages fosters community empowerment, promotes intergenerational knowledge transfer, and enhances self-esteem among younger generations, reinforcing their connection to their heritage.

In today's globalized society, where Native American languages and cultures face significant threats from colonization, assimilation, and modernization, committed initiatives for conservation and revitalization have never been more essential. By prioritizing these efforts, tribal communities can reclaim their narratives, strengthen their cultural practices, and ensure that their languages thrive for future generations. The importance of preserving tribal culture and language extends beyond the boundaries of individual communities; it contributes to the broader tapestry of human diversity, enriching the global cultural landscape.

The preservation and revitalization of Native American languages and cultures are essential to the identity and well-being of the 29 federally-recognized tribes and the bordering tribes whose traditional and current lands and waters are within Washington state. This section of the update to the *From Where the Sun Rises* (2008) report provides a snapshot overview of the current state of cultural and language education within these communities, including the roles of federal and state agencies, public schools, boards, committees, advocates, and opposing viewpoints. The goal is to highlight existing programs, the challenges faced in providing effective multilingual instruction in English and tribal languages and provide recommendations for enhancing tribal language education to foster fluent, multilingual tribal members.

Success Stories and Best Practices

Highlighting successful language and cultural education programs from various Tribes is invaluable for understanding effective practices. By documenting these success stories, we are identifying best practices and lessons learned, which can be adapted and implemented in other tribal contexts. These examples not only inspire action but also provide concrete evidence of the transformative power of language revitalization efforts. As a result, multiple Tribal voices and information about successful strategies have been included throughout this section of the report.

Cultural Context and Content

The public school system typically adheres to a standardized curriculum that prioritizes academic subjects such as math, science, language arts, and social studies. Unfortunately, this curriculum often lacks the inclusion of Native perspectives or content, resulting in minimal or absent culturally-relevant material. This disconnect can create challenges for Native students, who may struggle to relate to the educational content being presented.

Traditional American Indian education is deeply rooted in the cultural, spiritual, and historical contexts of each Tribe, incorporating teachings about the seasons of the land, as well as plants, animals, ancestors, ceremonies, and community values. This form of education takes a holistic approach, integrating spiritual, social, emotional, and intellectual growth.

At Swinomish, 9th through 12th grade students can learn Indigenous Science using the Between Two Worlds (BTW) curriculum. The BTW program was developed through a collaboration between BTW instructors, scientists, community members, and local environmental education organizations while also partnering with Swinomish Tribal departments to frame the curriculum using Swinomish history, traditional values, and ways of knowing. During the 2024-25 school year, the La Conner High School and the Learning Community offered regular courses throughout the year and provided opportunities for attendance during a 6-week block and extra-curricular activities (Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, 2025).

Teaching Methods, Teacher Preparation, and Professional Development

Public schools generally employ a more formalized, classroom-based teaching approach, focusing on lectures, standardized testing, and individualized instruction. Learning in these settings is often structured around memorization and standardized assessments, which can limit the depth and applicability of knowledge gained by students. Traditional education often emphasizes experiential learning, storytelling, observation, and participation in community activities. Knowledge is often conveyed through lived experiences, shared stories, and mentorship by elders which fosters a strong sense of community and continuity.

Although teacher preparation programs throughout the state vary greatly, many strive to provide opportunities for teachers to learn the skills necessary to provide a robust education for their students. With that said, some teacher preparation programs require pre-service teachers to successfully pass one credit of instruction supporting their integration of appropriate content or pedagogies for work with Tribal populations. There is one teacher preparation program in Washington at the University of Washington (UW) – Bothel campus which mandates students pass at least five credits related to such knowledges. UW-Bothel program will be highlighted in an upcoming section of this report.

Generally, participants who contributed to the knowledge and stories in this Tribal Language and Culture section emphasized the need for teacher training opportunities that not only build language fluency but also incorporate tribal historical knowledge. They also stressed the importance of training in classroom management, social and behavioral supports, and culturally relevant, sustaining, and revitalizing pedagogies tailored to language- and culture-specific classrooms.

Many in-service language and culture teachers expressed interest in teacher preparation courses and professional development opportunities that offer flexible schedules or delivery methods, allowing them to enhance their skills or credentials while continuing to teach. Utilizing Peer Learning Communities as a strategy centered on providing peer-learning opportunities for language and cultural educators was suggested. While many participants expressed a need to understand more about the state's course codes and how they could apply to language and culture education and supporting students in earning credits related to community-necessitated workforce development opportunities such as clam digging, working on family fishing boats, and preparing foods that sustain Tribal families and communities.

Role of Community, Elders, and First Peoples' Language, Culture, and Oral Traditions Certification

In traditional education, elders, chiefs, and heads of families, men and women, serve as crucial teachers and knowledge keepers, embodying the community's collective wisdom and cultural practices. Education is viewed as a shared responsibility, involving family and community members in teaching children about cultural values and languages. In contrast, the primary responsibility for education in public schools rests with certified teachers and administrative staff, resulting in less emphasis on community involvement or the inclusion of elders in the teaching process. Consequently, family and community engagement levels can vary significantly from one public school to another.

Several conversations included discussion of the value of integrating community members, elders, cultural knowledge holders, and other cultural teachers into classroom and educational settings. Culture and language knowledge holders are highly sought, especially in districts located on or near reservations, or those serving a large number of tribal students. Oftentimes, there are not enough teachers to meet these needs.

The First Peoples' Language, Culture and Oral Traditions Certification (First People's) and grants have proven to be instrumental and greatly assist with these efforts. In fact, the First People's Certification provided an avenue for 22 language and cultural knowledge holders from the Yakama Nation to achieve certification, greatly growing the language and cultural education capacity within schools that want or need to integrate Tribal education for their students. One First Peoples' Certified teacher finally achieved her credentials after sharing her knowledge with Head Start students for 20 years. Although First Peoples' Certified teachers have demonstrated their culture and language expertise utilizing established standards, they are often treated as subpar compared to their counterparts who hold other credentials. One of the most common topics of conversation from the listening session held in collaboration with OSPI ONE's Braiding Knowledge Systems: A Shared Vision for Literacy & Language Convening on May 8, 2025, was in relation to this issue. Some participants explained how high expectations are placed on language teachers who are not paid a livable wage – especially in rural schools with long drives. Others explained how a few First Peoples' Certified teachers were employed by the Tribe and were expected to drive between rural schools who "borrowed" them to provide enrichment and after school education. Many participants advocated for "livable wages", comparable benefits, and a common pay model and structure.

Approach to Knowledge

Traditional education is grounded in local knowledge and practical skills relevant to the community's cultural practices and environment. This includes an understanding of local ecology, traditional medicine, art, and community governance. Conversely, the knowledge taught in public schools tends to be universal and standardized, focusing on academic subjects that may not directly address the cultural contexts or needs of Indigenous students. This disconnection can lead to a lack of relevance for Native American students, impacting their educational experience and sense of identity.

Concept of Success

In the public education system, success is typically defined through academic performance, often assessed through standardized tests and grades, reflecting a narrower criterion that may not encompass the holistic successes emphasized in tribal educational systems. This disparity highlights the importance of acknowledging and incorporating the distinct educational approaches of American Indian communities into the broader public education framework. In tribal traditional and cultural education, however, success is often measured by an individual's ability to contribute to the community, engage in cultural practices, and embody the values and teachings of their ancestors. The emphasis lies on personal and communal well-being, with educational outcomes tied to cultural and community involvement.

Since 2017, the Washington State Legislature has supported tribal language revitalization, growth, and instruction in state schools. Two dual language grants were awarded in 2017: one to the Quileute Tribal School and another to Wa He Lut Indian School, supporting Quileute and Quilshootseed language learning. In 2019, the legislature allocated specific resources for Tribal Language grants. This legislative investment increased grant amounts, expanded the number of State-Tribal Education Compact schools receiving grants, and included a few public schools. For public schools, the grants require Tribal consultation, involving the Tribe's Language and Culture leadership, and mandate that Tribal language instruction be led by First People's Certified educators. During this period, a Professional Learning Community group was established by ONE to support Tribal language educators by hosting gatherings for sharing ideas and best practices. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the OSPI Office of Native Education (ONE) secured over two million dollars from the federal Emergency Elementary and Secondary School Relief Fund (ESSER) to support Tribal Language work in districts and Tribal compact schools statewide. Alongside the Tribal Language grants, ONE added a Tribal Language Liaison Coordinator position. Although the ESSER funds have expired, the legislature continues to support the ONE Tribal Language Program Supervisor position and the Tribal Language grant program, albeit with reduced grantees and overall grant awards. For more information about the grant programs and the professional learning community gatherings, go to the OSPI/ONE Tribal Languages website.

An example of the strong work with schools built through historical and contemporary partnerships between the Makah Tribe and the state of Washington: The Cape Flattery School District now combines resources from community members, the State, and the Tribe to truly integrate cultural lifeways, ways of being, and value systems throughout daily learning. See "Educating Our Makah Children: An Interview with Michelle Parkin, Superintendent of Cape Flattery Public Schools" to learn more.

Educating Our Makah Children: An Interview with Michelle Parkin, Superintendent of Cape Flattery Public Schools

The first (Bureau of Indian Affairs) Day School was built in Neah Bay, and originally there were five (5) Makah villages that were inhabited throughout the year. The Federal Government begin its assimilation process to remove the Indian from the man... They wanted to make sure that we were dependent on the Federal Government for resources, and so they knew that by taking that track it would alleviate some of the concern of the Natives, making trouble... and causing an uprising because of some of the new policies that they were putting into place. So, they built a (Bureau of Indian Affairs) Day School in the middle of what is now known as Neah Bay. They had a requirement that children of school age were required to attend the Bureau of Indian Affairs Day School. There were threats of parents being incarcerated if they didn't send their children, and there were other threats that were made as well, and there was a strict protocol that was put into place. The children weren't allowed to sing traditional songs, they weren't allowed to dance, and, most importantly, not allowed to speak Makah, our language. And without a language, your culture dies, and so we are very proud that Makah still maintains a living culture.

And so, with that change, they realized, the Government realized, that the influence of the families was still greater than they had hoped for. When it was time to go seal hunting, for example, fathers would come, and they would get their sons and take them out seal hunting. And so, the Government moved the school two miles outside of a second village called the Ada. It was turned into a boarding school at that point in time. If the kids were good during the weekdays, and followed all of the rules, then they could go home and see their parents on the weekends. That boarding school only served the younger elementary population. So, once you hit about 6th grade to 12th grade, students were then transferred to outside boarding schools like Tulalip, Tacoma, and Chemawa in Oregon.

When we had our celebration the other day, there was a descendant from the Markishtum family... who sits on our school board and is very active in education and has been for decades. But we had her stand up, all the kids in grades six through 12, right? That's our middle school and high school. So, half of the gymnasium stands up. It was a visual of—can you imagine what this community would be like today if these kids were not a part of it for nine months out of the year? When you're an educator, you're looking for those teachable moments where the kid, where it can resonate with them. It's not just words that they're hearing in a speech, but to be able to see... what kind of change that would mean to our community, if we didn't have those children present.

From that point, our community started to get together and discuss the importance of having our children present, because that was the only way that we were going to be able to maintain our cultural teachings...
Superintendent Parkin explained how the Inclusionary Practices Project (IPP) provided support for true inclusion of traditional knowledges and educational practices...

...our language program, we put in $250,000 a year to support those language teachers through the museum to come in and offer carving, weaving, beading... the language program as well, and so their presence is felt with the new school.

We have identified culture classrooms, but outside we have what's called a working village, and it'll have a covered kitchen area where they'll be able to process. They'll have smoke houses, a greenhouse. We have a fish hatchery that's been very successful, so they'll be able to release their fry right directly into the Sail River...
We were able to use... the science and the reports that we're able to establish. Not only is it traditional for us to go bathing in a cold river or cold water. But there's science to prove that it has a healthy impact on your life. What happens to your brain when you're singing? You dance, you know? And we started to really focus on that mental health aspect.

So, today,,... we have a campus that's just intertwined. It's not a specialty that's brought in. It's just who we are.

Benefits of Multilingual Education Supported by Academic Research

1. ***Cognitive Development***

Research indicates that multilingual education enhances cognitive abilities, resulting in improved problem-solving skills, increased creativity, and greater overall cognitive flexibility. Students who develop proficiency in more than one language often exhibit stronger critical thinking skills compared to their monolingual peers.

2. ***Academic Performance***

Numerous studies have demonstrated that multilingual students tend to perform better academically, particularly in areas such as reading and mathematics. Programs that incorporate a child's first language alongside the second language can lead to higher levels of academic achievement. For example, students who learn in both their native language and English often have better literacy skills than those who are instructed only in English.

3. ***Cultural Relevance***

Multilingual education programs rooted in Indigenous languages and cultures reinforce students' identities and cultural heritage. This cultural relevance is crucial for fostering self-esteem and a positive sense of identity among Native American students which can contribute to their overall academic engagement and success.

4. ***Social and Emotional Benefits***

Research highlights that multilingual education can improve social-emotional skills by promoting intercultural understanding and fostering empathy. Multilingual students often display greater adaptability and stronger relationships with peers from diverse backgrounds, which is essential in today's increasingly globalized society.

5. ***Increased Opportunities***

In an economy that increasingly values bilingualism and multilingualism, the ability to speak multiple languages can enhance career opportunities and employability. Teaching American Indian languages alongside English, positions students to navigate both their cultural contexts and the broader socioeconomic landscape effectively.

6. ***Accountability and Funding***

Education policies are increasingly emphasizing accountability in terms of student performance and outcomes tied to funding. Research indicating that multilingual education is associated with improved academic outcomes can justify the allocation of funding for these programs. States and schools can leverage research-backed evidence to secure funding, demonstrating that multilingual education programs will enhance student achievement, thereby meeting accountability standards.

Multilingual, Tribal Languages, and English Education Summary

The evidence supporting multilingual education within the educational system is substantial and multifaceted. It not only aids cognitive and academic development but also fosters cultural relevance and social-emotional growth. As the state of Washington looks to enhance accountability tied to funding, recognizing the value of multilingual education serves as a strategic approach to improving outcomes for Native American students. By investing in language fluency and culture education initiatives, states honor tribal requests while also positioning students for success – culturally and in broader societal contexts.

The recently developed and implemented Immersion Pilot Program within Inchelium Public Schools provides a shining example of how a model program could look. After only one year of implementation, the Dual Language Kindergarten co-teachers have seen growth linguistically, academically, and in terms of their students' socio-emotional wellbeing. See "Inchelium Public Schools' Immersion Pilot Program" to learn more.

Inchelium Public Schools' Immersion Pilot Program

Leah Dick and Shannon Rosenbaum have just completed their first year of transforming their kindergarten classroom in Inchelium Public Schools with the support of their elders, teachers, community, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and Superintendent Brian Freeman. They are using nselxcin as the medium of instruction and integrating Sinixt cultural teachings during nearly all formal instructional and student-guided learning blocks – quite possibly the only public school doing this in the State of Washington.

Leah's journey as the Dual Language Salish Teacher in the kindergarten classroom began, quite literally, as she was led back and forth between teaching in early learning settings and learning and teaching nselxcin and captikwl for adult learners. Throughout the process, Leah has earned the First Peoples' Language, Culture and Oral Tradition Certification through OSPI. She recounts:
...when I say that I've learned the language for a long time, that was a long process of starting my language journey... When I was growing up, I didn't think this is who or where I would be in my life. I'm grateful I am here for the fact that I am doing something that's life changing – community changing.

Shannon's journey toward serving as the Dual Language English Teacher in the kindergarten classroom began a little differently. Her passion is connected to the culture of the Sinixt people:
I didn't speak fluently growing up... We had this cultural arts program called Native studies... In addition, I had a very well-known person... a mentor... he said, "you have to come home to make this a better place. If you want to see something in your kids' future, you have to make it...It should be open for all the community kids."

So, Shannon returned and began the Inchelium Cultural Research Center while substituting in Kindergarten with IPS soon after Brian Freeman began as Superintendent. Brian recalled:
It shouldn't be language and culture. It is language is culture. What I also know: students need language and culture to develop a sense of identity and belonging... if you take a part of who they are and don't let them explore that... they're going to struggle in school... They saw a challenge and made it happen... It is because of who they are! They are awesome people!

Every school day, Leah uses nselxcin as the medium of instruction while Shannon integrates cultural aspects and teaches English literacy concepts. Leah described a normal school day in the Dual Language Kindergarten Classroom:
We're using [nselxcin] throughout the whole day. When we're having them lining up, when they're washing their hands, if we're doing math, they're using the language in the numbers... We only call them their Salish names in the classroom. It's not all-day instruction, but we're all day using it... they're playing... sing these songs that we're learning, or they'll be counting.

With students' families, they support the social-emotional growth of each child. Parents and teachers support and engage with one another to create a nurturing environment that fosters both the security and empowerment of their kindergarteners.
We meet with them regularly. Not just assessment updates or the intake process. We exchange phone numbers.... I'm exhausted every day because it's really emotionally fulfilling. You know, you're doing hard work and it's for a good reason. (S. Rosenbaum, personal communication, June 12, 2025).

Leah extended that by emphasizing how excited parents are about next year. Our conversation that day concluded as Brian, Shannon, and Leah collaboratively shared their dreams for furthering this transformative work into a K-5 Dual Language program that sustains their children and supports the economy of the local communities by integrating traditional foods harvested by community members.

Brian closed, "I am so proud!... We have these two powerful women... that are making a life change... In 20 years, they're going to see it!" To do that, he continued, "We need funding! We need continued support from the State Board of Education!" And the students need food that is harvested down the road – that strengthens their connection to their homelands, something that can be remedied by Compacts between the State and the Tribes.

Language Programs and Fluency Initiatives

Efforts to revitalize Native languages are gaining momentum through a spectrum of initiatives. On one end of the spectrum, some public school programs, especially those in urban and off-reservation settings, provide courses such as those titled “Native American Studies”, center cultural knowledge, and introduce basic language concepts such as colors, numbers, and animals.

Other strategies include immersive language programs, community workshops, and the development of language-learning applications. These approaches not only engage tribal members and descendants but also create a supportive environment for language acquisition. According to Barry (sʔulustú) Moses and others involved in a conversation during OSPI ONE’s Braiding Knowledge Systems: A Shared Vision for Literacy & Language Convenings (personal communication, May 7, 2025), although these programs are unable to produce language speakers, they do support the creation of “lifelines” of students to tribal communities, value systems, and identity development through enrichment classes that can be critical for student wellbeing.

On the other hand, fluency training programs like the Paul Creek Method—developed through partnerships between language teachers and fluent first-language elders associated with the Salish School of Spokane—are producing remarkable results. Through rapid, intensive instruction, both K–12 students and adult non-speakers are becoming proficient second-language speakers. This successful model has been widely shared and is now used across a variety of settings, including tribal, private, and public programs, as well as nonprofit organizations on the Colville Reservation, within the Kalispel and Spokane Tribes, and in the city of Spokane. Its influence extends across urban, regional, national, and even international contexts (C. Bell, JR Bluff, B. Moses, C. Parkin, L. Wiley, personal communications, 2014-2025).

At the recommendation of Tribal Councilperson Monica Tonasket and OSPI ONE, we spent an afternoon learning more about Barry (sʔulustú) Moses about the Spokane Tribe’s N3 Pilot Program, which is based on the Paul Creek Indigenous language fluency transfer program. For the wellbeing and continuance of the Indigenous languages and dialects in the state of Washington, Moses advocated for a statewide focus on language fluency. (See “An Overt Focus on Fluency: An Interview with Barry (sʔulustú) Moses, Spokane Tribe N3 Pilot Program (May 27, 2025)” and “Spokane Tribe N3 Pilot Fluency Training Program” to learn more.

Integrating Cultural Education

It is crucial to integrate cultural education with language instruction to enrich the learning experience. This integration involves teaching traditional practices, ecological knowledge, stories, and values alongside the language itself. Such an approach deepens understanding and appreciation of the culture, ensuring that language learning is meaningful and contextually relevant.

An Overt Focus on Fluency: An Interview with
Barry (sʔulustú) Moses, Spokane Tribe N3 Pilot Program (May 27, 2025)

To achieve true language fluency among Indigenous students, we must recognize the critical need for a unified and focused approach to language education. Currently, there is a lack of consensus at both the Tribal and State levels, including within the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), regarding the value of attaining and integrating language fluency into educational policy.

While enrichment language classes in public schools introduce Indigenous languages and cultures, they fall short of fostering genuine fluency. These programs are valuable but must be seen as a starting point, rather than a final goal. To make significant strides, we need to engage in collaborative efforts between the State and Tribal nations to develop comprehensive policies that prioritize fluency training. Individual tribes, each possessing unique languages, cultures, and needs, must play a pivotal role in shaping these policies. It is essential to explore partnerships making funding available for fluency training initiatives specifically. This collaborative model would enable the development of clear criteria for selecting candidates and establishing effective methods and strategies for achieving fluency.

With a sufficient number of “tribes in Eastern Washington, we have an excellent opportunity to pilot such a partnership, ensuring we prioritize fluency as an explicit educational goal. By creating comprehensive policies that define fluency training and providing dedicated funding for fluency apprenticeships, we can establish programs tailored to the specific needs of each tribe, while building a strong foundation for future generations. An apprenticeship model could be particularly effective, allowing experienced speakers to mentor and guide new learners in immersive and practical language use.”

This initiative warrants an overt focus on fluency, [emphasis added] as it deserves its own dedicated attention within the broader educational framework. True fluency is not merely about basic language acquisition; it represents cultural resilience, identity restoration, and the empowerment of Indigenous communities. By championing these policies and partnerships, we will not only revitalize tribal languages but also enrich the educational landscape of Washington State, ensuring that Indigenous youth are equipped with the linguistic skills necessary to preserve their cultural heritage and contribute to their communities meaningfully.

Community Involvement
Community involvement and engagement play a vital role in shaping and implementing educational programs. Successful initiatives prioritize the voices of tribal members and local leaders in making curriculum decisions. By valuing community input, programs can better reflect the needs and aspirations of the people they serve.

Collaboration with Educational Institutions
Partnerships between tribes and educational entities, such as public schools and universities, are essential for supporting language and cultural education. Collaborative efforts can include the joint development of educational materials and teacher training programs, facilitating a shared commitment to preserving and revitalizing Native languages, as highlighted by the Tribal Language grants.

Leveraging Technology
Technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, may provide access to and offer significant opportunities for enhancing language learning and cultural education. Online platforms and multimedia resources can to vital materials for a broader audience, making language education more accessible and engaging.

Supporting Structures and Resources
Identifying and leveraging support structures is crucial for advancing language and cultural preservation efforts in tribal communities. This includes securing grants, federal funding, and assistance from nonprofit organizations dedicated to Native education. These resources are vital for overcoming financial barriers and enabling the development of sustainable language and cultural programs that can thrive despite existing challenges.

Addressing Challenges and Barriers

Despite notable progress, ongoing challenges persist in the realm of language revitalization. Limited funding, the need for recognition of tribal sovereignty in educational governance, and a shortage of trained language instructors continue to hinder the effective implementation of these initiatives. Recognizing these barriers is essential, as it paves the way for targeted solutions and advocacy that can support tribal educational initiatives.

A Holistic Approach to Education

Advocating for a holistic approach to education is paramount. This perspective underscores the significance of addressing the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of tribal life, recognizing that language and cultural education are integral to the overall well-being of the community. Moreover, integrating tribal ways of knowing—encompassing environmental sciences, medicinal plants, and food preservation—is essential for fostering an understanding of human behaviors that can positively impact global issues. This integration helps address climate change, lessen ocean acidification, and preserve critical habitats for salmon and the ecosystems of the great plateaus and plains that are fundamental to Native American cultural practices and values.

Inter-Local Compacts for Collaboration

Interlocal compacts offer a valuable mechanism for formalizing commitments between tribes and non-tribal entities, fostering collaboration on language and cultural education initiatives. These agreements bolster partnerships and enhance the effectiveness of revitalization efforts, creating synergies that can lead to more robust educational environments.

Legal and Policy Advocacy

Continued advocacy regarding legal frameworks that support tribal educational rights is essential. This effort includes revisiting federal and state regulations that may impose limitations on tribal sovereignty in education. Strengthening legal protections for Native American educational practices will empower Tribes to pursue their language and cultural revitalization goals more freely.

Participants of the listening sessions conducted regarding language and culture education stressed the need for the development of policies centered on:

- Protection of Tribal language and culture education given the federal political climate.
- Establishment of Tribal languages as an official language of the associated Nation.
- Integrating language fluency into educational policy.
- Collaborative efforts between the State and Tribal nations to develop comprehensive policies that define, prioritize, and provide funding for fluency training.

Evaluation and Accountability

Implementing mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of language and cultural preservation programs is critical. Ensuring these initiatives meet the needs of tribal communities requires ongoing assessment and adaptability. By establishing clear evaluation criteria, we can ensure that programs evolve alongside the changing dynamics within Indigenous communities, fostering continuous improvement and relevance. The highlight titled “Spokane Tribe N3 Pilot Fluency Training Program” provides a recommendation for a collaborative “pilot” program to begin the process for determining appropriate evaluation and accountability metrics for language fluency programs.

By embracing the concepts and recommendations outlined in this section, we can create a comprehensive tribal language and cultural education that honors the teachings, hopes, and vision of our Native children, now and for generations to come.

An Overt Focus on Fluency: An Interview with Barry (sʔulustú) Moses, Spokane Tribe N3 Pilot Program (May 27, 2025)

To advocate for increasing language fluency and improved educational outcomes statewide, Barry (sʔulustú) Moses shared the story of the Spokane Tribes' efforts to nx̣oq̓íniščn speakers and teachers.

Today, nx̣oq̓íniščn, the Spokane dialect of the Salish language, is critically endangered with only two fluent, first language speakers who actively engage in speaking and teaching. Thirty years of study, experience, and partnerships have led sʔulustú to understand that it takes 4,000 hours to achieve conversational fluency. In 2018 or 2019, sʔulustú approached the Spokane Tribal Business Council (Council) about the criticality of reframing language fluency as a form of teacher preparation – the Spokane Tribe needed to invest in growing fluent speakers. "If we invest in future fluent speakers, then we know that our Native languages will live forever." After explaining the required investment of $50,000 plus benefts and 2 years of uninterrupted time, per person, Council supported sʔulustú in the creation and successful implementation of "N3" – nx̣oq̓íniščn 3 (N3) – Spokane Language 3. "We extracted them from their regular job, and we gave them a 2-year immersion" using a modified language fluency transfer system borrowed from the Kalispel Tribe Language Program and Salish School of Spokane. "60% of our students have… jumped 5 levels of fluency in the last 2 years." They "maintain full conversations – not just with themselves, but with the few elders that we have left."

sʔulustú described how the N3 Student-Employees are becoming better teachers and will have more to offer the community. "As we begin to bring more people into fluency, we have to believe that it would have an exponential kind of growth – some of them going back to our immersion school." Immersion schools that aim to achieve both fluency and increase academic outcomes must "be staffed by people who are themselves fluent", which then "create[s] the possibility that they could speak all day to the kids in the language… [and] that the kids could become fluent themselves. Because they're immersed in fluency."

At the statewide and policy levels, sʔulustú advocates for extending the First Peoples' Language, Culture and Oral Tradition Certification by collaboratively developing definitions, policies, and designating funding to support each sovereign Nation in the development of an apprenticeship model with an overt focus on fluency. With a goal of revitalizing Native languages throughout Washington, and improving the educational opportunity outcomes for K-12 students throughout Washington, sʔulustú exclaimed:

> I would love to see the day that every tribe in our State had some kind of fluency training program… on a policy level, on an organizational level, and on a funding level… an investment in fluency training on a statewide basis under the banner of fluency training. (Moses, personal communication, May 27, 2025).

Extending the First Peoples' Language, Culture and Oral Tradition Certification by collaboratively developing definitions, policies, and designating funding to support each sovereign Nation in the development of an apprenticeship model with an overt focus on fluency. With a goal of revitalizing Native languages throughout Washington, and improving the educational opportunity outcomes for K-12 students throughout Washington (From Spokane N3 Pilot Interview).

Our Children, Our Most Valuable Resource: Native American Student Identification and Data Sovereignty

"In 2008, I was serving in the State Senate. In part, I ran for office because of the educational gap I witnessed in my children's school district. When their school presented test score data, they included every group except Native American students. I demanded that they revise their presentation and return with data specifically on Native American students. That same year, when the opportunity gap reports were released, one of the key recommendations was to establish the Educational Opportunity Gap Advisory Board. Accessing disaggregated data has always been a concern, as it's essential for policymakers to have an accurate picture of student achievement in order to identify opportunity gaps and directly address these issues."

Senator Claudia Kauffman, 47th Legislative District, Washington State

"We're struggling with deciphering the data and being able to analyze the data and put it in a form where can use it to make effective decisions or we can use it to know what's happening with our students." -Listening Session Participant Quote

"It's really important to collect our data in an accurate manner. Students can only select Washington State tribes as their tribal identification. But our bordering tribes are not an option. We have the Clarkston School District and Pullman School District that are on the Nez Perce homelands, and you can't even select Nez Perce."
-Listening Session Participant Quote

"The issue raised in the 2008 report continues to this day." -Listening Session Participant Quote

"We need a data dashboard, not only for our local tribal consult schools, we have seven of them, but for all of our students within the whole entire state." -Listening Session Participant Quote

The Issue at Hand

The identification and classification of Native American students within education systems are deeply tied to the concepts of equity, sovereignty, and historical injustice. Identity for Native American individuals is not merely a matter of self-perception or cultural affiliation but is interwoven with systemic policies, legal designations, and tribal citizenship. Identity is formed through a complex interplay of nested systems of relationships as illustrated by the Ecological Systems Model and the Student Integration Framework. These frameworks demonstrate that identity development begins at the microsystem level—family, peers, community—but is continuously shaped by larger societal forces, both historical and current, that impact the ongoing development of individual identity.

Native American identity is also uniquely political. Tribes are sovereign nations with governance rights recognized by federal treaties. However, federal and state educational policies have often failed to acknowledge this reality, instead, imposing rigid and racially reductive categories that obscure the true number and needs of Native students. As a result, the misidentification and under-identification of Native students have directly impacted their access to resources, services, and representation. This paper explores the systemic issues that have led to this undercounting, the implications for educational equity and tribal sovereignty, and the necessary policy and data practices required to honor and reflect Native identities accurately.

Native Youth Exploring Higher Education Camp at WSU- Photo Credit: Zoe Higheagle Strong

> The ways that groups define themselves, their places in the world (at least in part, recognizing that places are co-constructed by many things), and their cultures is a form of power.
>
> **Bryan Brayboy, Ph.D. (Lumbee) - *Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education, 2006***

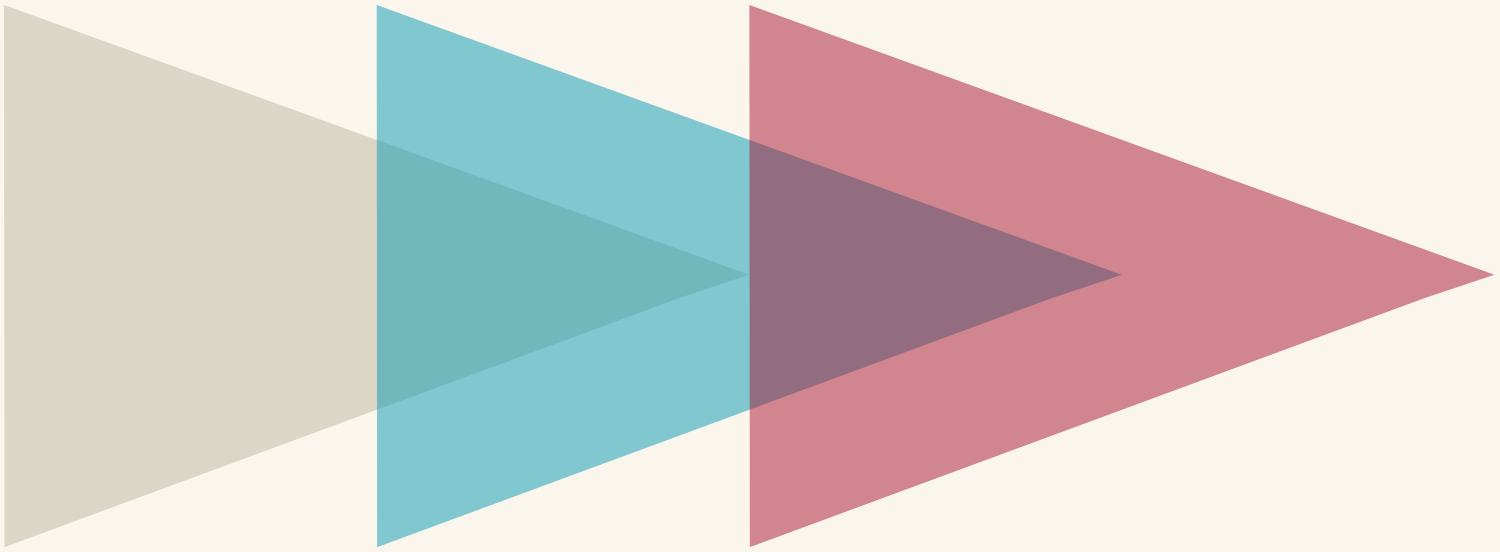
The topic of identity for Native American peoples is a challenging one. First, one must address the names we and others use for ourselves: Indian, Native, Indigenous, American Indian / Alaska Native, First Nations, and more. Some of these are laden with history, cultural connotations, stereotypes, and misconceptions. Some are interchangeable depending on the speaker, some are anathema, some are bound in law, and some are bound in tradition. Others are best left unsaid, mired in a legacy of racism, forced assimilation, and deficit views towards the first peoples of these lands. Names are things of power, they give concepts shape, definition, and meaning, and help craft a shared meaning of the unknown.

That concept of definition and shared meaning is also a challenge, since as with all demographic, racial, or ethnic subgroups, being defined as a Native individual has specific preconceived ideas to non-Native individuals, based on their own knowledge (or lack thereof), exposure, experiences, and pre- or misconceptions. It is not uncommon to hear stories from Native individuals where they recount being met with curiosity or hostility when encountering non-Natives in cities and towns off reservation lands. One elder reported being approached by people multiple times when he and his spouse would go out for dinner in a nearby city, with people asking him if he was “allowed” to be off reservation land. Another individual was asked if his people still lived in teepees; while another was asked to prove their enrollment status when presenting at a conference on Native education. Not all of these interactions were intended to be negative and some of them came as the result of genuine curiosity on the part of non-Natives. Nor are they intended as a universal experience for all Native American individuals. They do, however, serve as a reminder that identity—cultural, racial, or otherwise—is often a challenging concept to define.

The Formation of Identity

The Ecological Systems Model defines the creation of an individual's identity as the result of a series of overlapping and nesting systems and relationships. The first of these systems, the microsystem, is the smallest unit of interacting relationships one forms from birth and consists primarily of an individual's immediate family, peers, and social groups. The microsystem sets the basis for identity construction, as the developing individual defines their values, temperament, personality, goals, and needs based on the two-way relationships within this system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It is during these years where family traditions, cultural traditions, language, and ways-of-knowing are first formed and cemented as the cornerstone of personal identity. The microsystem is also where developing individuals are most likely to be exposed to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2023). The impact of traumatic events during childhood can result in developmental, psychological, cognitive, and biological changes, with long-term impacts on social and physical development (Ports et al., 2021). Research data has shown that AI/AN children are more likely to be exposed to higher rates of ACEs than their non-AI/AN peers, with statistically significant high rates of emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and parental separation/divorce (Ports et al., 2021).

As an individual ages, they encounter other microsystems and the interaction between any two microsystems results in the creation of a mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Mesosystems are defined by the two-way, reciprocal or opposing push-and-pull between the two microsystems and their conflicting or shared values, goals, needs, and wants. Mesosystems are as varied as their participants, scaling from the interactions between two individuals from different backgrounds, to the interactions of groups and communities (see Sidebar 1). One of the important components of the mesosystem is the consequences of the interaction, i.e. what happens to the developing individual or individuals due to the interaction between the two microsystems. This can have positive results, where the two systems interact in a way to reinforce each other through shared values, goals, needs, and wants, or it can have negative results when the developing individual is split between the two.



Sidebar 1:
Mesosystem Example Scenarios

1. A group of students has been together in the same school since kindergarten, but is now joining a larger middle school alongside students from several dozen other primary schools in different communities.	4. A child has parents who mistrust public education and often talk negatively about school staff, school programs, or what the child is learning at school. The child starts telling their teacher they don't have to listen to them and their academic performance begins to drop.
2. A group of students has been together in the same school since kindergarten, but is now joining a larger middle school alongside students from several dozen other primary schools in different communities.	5. A Native family spends three weeks every spring fishing as a source of food and income. Their home district has a strong relationship with the tribe and excuses the absences of the children during that time, providing them a combination of online and offline learning experiences to help them maintain pace with their classmates.
3. A group of students has been together in the same school since kindergarten, but is now joining a larger middle school alongside students from several dozen other primary schools in different communities.	6. A child has parents who mistrust public education and often talk negatively about school staff, school programs, or what the child is learning at school. The child starts telling their teacher they don't have to listen to them and their academic performance begins to drop.

For example, what happens when a non-English speaking family joins a predominantly English-speaking community and school? A positive mesosystem interaction would be one where they are given support for English language development as well as support in their native or home language, while a negative interaction would be one where they received little in the way of language support and their children would have to decide between being proficient English speakers or maintaining their home language as they developed.

For Native American individuals, growing up in a microsystem defined by immediate family and community could mean being entrenched in their traditional languages, foods, cultural practices, and ceremonies. It could also mean growing up in a household where all of those elements are missing, with languages and ceremonies having been eliminated due to generations of forced assimilation, traditional foods being absent thanks to forced relocations and economic / environmental barriers, and traditions being only a memory held by a dwindling elder population.

For Native individuals, their first mesosystem is likely formed by their entry into K-12 education where the traditional Eurocentric Western education model focuses primarily on European and early American colonial history and topics of study, and relegating indigenous people and their cultural heritage as “historical” or conquered peoples, despite still being very much alive and present members of society. How a school or district chooses to interact with Native students, families, and communities sets the tone of how the relationships within this mesosystem will develop. If the educational system is inclusive, supportive, and accepting of Native American students and their identity, these students are more likely to succeed both as academic scholars and also in their self-image as Native peoples. By contrast, educational systems that view Native American students through a deficit, forced-assimilation mindset, where Native culture is viewed as unimportant as best and as a barrier to being “successful” students at worst, Native students and their communities are more likely to feel isolated, ostracized, unsupported, and unincluded.

Persistence and Success and Being Native

The Student Integration Model by Vicente Tinto (1975) is one theoretical framework that can be used to understand the impact that relationships and support systems have on AI/AN student academic success (Tinto, 1975). Tinto's work at the postsecondary level found that regardless of a student's pre-college attributes, socioeconomic status, or individual capabilities, what was in fact the largest predictor of persistence towards graduation was the degree to which a student was fully integrated into the school's academic and social systems. More precisely, students who had strong, positive relationships with instructional staff, peers, and mentors were more likely to be academically successful and graduate when compared to their peers who lacked those same relationships. Even for those students who had more challenges, weaker academic skills, or fewer resources, strong relationships with staff was a higher predictor of persistence towards graduation than other factors (Tinto, 1975).

Another element of Tinto's research was the idea of relevance (Tinto, 1999, 2016). In his 2016 paper on student retention, Tinto makes the point that students who are able to make relevant connections between their learning and their personal goals are more likely to stay in school and persist towards graduation. Goals could be fluid, changing based on student interests and external pressures, but having a goal and connecting that goal to relevant learning had a powerful impact on student achievement. The cross connection between highly supportive relationships, relevant learning experiences, and support for student goals were collectively found to have a high degree of impact on student success.

For Native American students, being recognized as Native individuals is an important factor in the persistence process. Recognizing the importance of culture, traditional ways and sources of knowing, and culturally-related goals is an important aspect of relationship building and support for student values, interests, and goals. One of the fundamental aspects of Tribal Critical Race Theory is that there is a "dialogical relationship between culture, knowledge, and power", that culture helps form individual identity within larger groups, knowledge anchors culture to the world around us and what we know, and that both give people power to define themselves in the world (Brayboy, 2006). Native students with a strong sense of their cultural identity are more likely to have aspirations, goals, needs, and wants that are aligned with their culture and identity. Those individuals would, therefore, best benefit by systems that recognize and support that identity.

By contrast, educational systems that do not recognize the value of Native identity are less likely to be ones where Native students form strong, supportive relationships with staff or peers. Given the importance of relationships in the formation and support for identity and the impact supportive relationships have on student achievement, the failure for educational institutions and staff to recognize, value, and support the identity of Native students has a direct and negative impact on student achievement and academic success. Therefore, it is critical that educational systems understand how to identify Native American students, how to develop relationships with students, families, and tribes, and how to develop systems of support and relationships that support Native student development and success.

Timeline of Race and Ethnicity Federal Policies

In October 1997, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) announced a revision to Statistical Policy Directive No. 15 (SPD 15) (Office of Management and Budget [OMB], 1997). This revision (OMB-1997) led to the creation of the two-question format for identifying race and ethnicity demographic data:

1. Ethnicity - Are you Hispanic or Latino (Y/N)?
2. Race - Which of the following races do you belong to?
    a. American Indian / Alaska Native
    b. Asian
    c. Black / African American
    d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
    e. White

The OMB-1997 revision was implemented with the 2000 census, with subsequent full implementation by all federal programs and agencies by 2003. In 2007, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) published additional guidance on race/ethnicity data collection which modified how school districts and other educational institutions and agencies were to collect and categorize race/ethnicity data (U.S. Department of Education [ED], 2007). This guidance (ED-2007) led to two major changes: 1) the creation of the "Two or More Races" category, and 2) aggregating any combination of federal race codes and Hispanic/Latino ethnicity under a broader "Hispanic/Latino" category without consideration of race. Under this new guidance, any individual who self-identified as Hispanic/Latino and one or more federal races would only be considered as "Hispanic/Latino" and their underlying racial heritage would be suppressed. Similarly, any individual who self-identified as any combination of two or more federal races would only be considered as "Two or More Races" and, as with Hispanic individuals, their underlying racial heritage would be largely suppressed in official datasets.

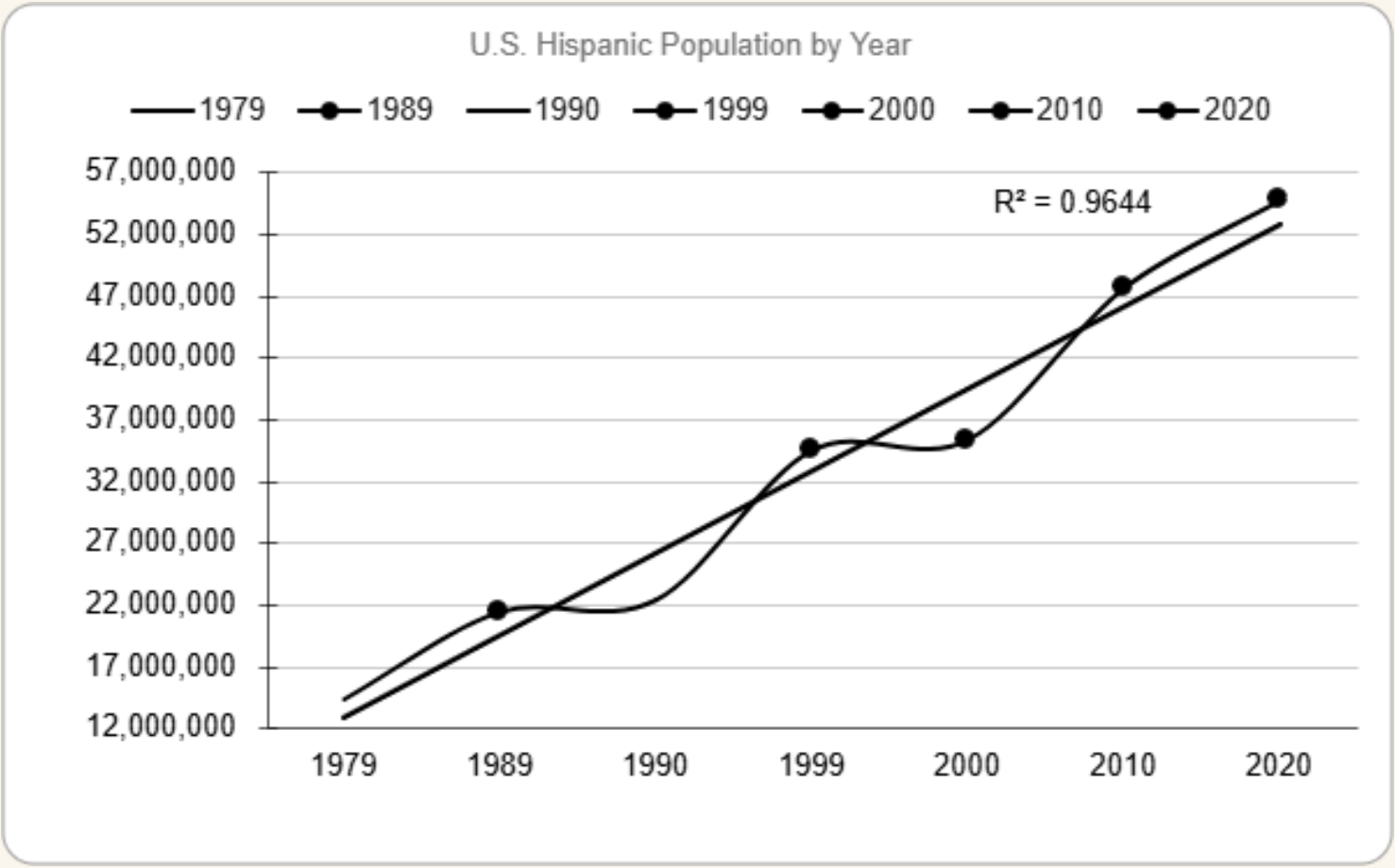
Hispanic Ethnicity

The implementation of the ED-2007 guidance led to shifts in population demographics, with census records demonstrating a large population increase in Hispanic / Latino individuals in 2000 (12,096,809) and 2010 (12,251,441). These two years marked the implementation windows for the OMB-1997 race/ethnicity standards and the ED race/ethnicity guidance and accordingly saw large population jumps that did not match the years before and after those census periods. Census data between 1979 and 1990, for example, saw a population increase of only 7,048,630 and census data between 2010 and 2020 saw a similar increase of 7,076,190. While the overall trend of Hispanic population growth is fairly linear over a broad range of time, these two years do indicate an anomaly in population trends and the impact of both the OMB-1997 and ED-2007 guidance.

Table 1. U.S. Hispanic Population by Year

1979	1989	1990	1999	2000	2010	2020
14,339,387	21,388,017	22,354,059	34,450,868	35,305,818	47,557,259	54,633,449

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2020a, 2020b



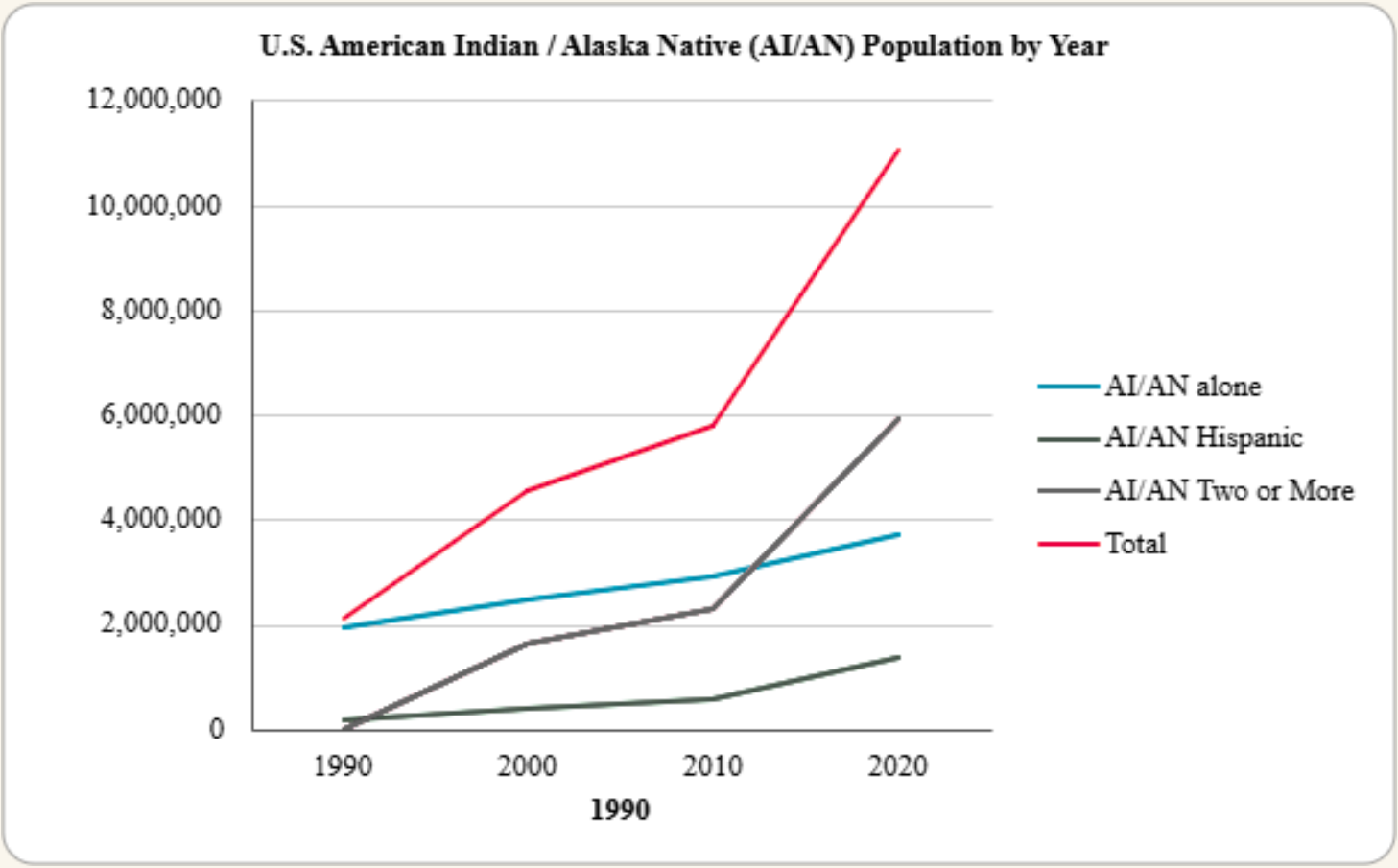
American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN)

As with the Hispanic/Latino population, revisions to race/ethnicity standards impacted population counts for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) individuals. As indicated in Table 2, the population of AI/AN alone individuals -- meaning only those who indicated Federal Race 1 - AI/AN and not as a combination of other federal race codes or Hispanic/Latino ethnicity -- demonstrated a steady increase between census years with an average increase of 589,300 every 10 years. With the implementation of OMB-1997 and ED-2007 and the inclusion of the Two or More Races category, the data reveals that the AI/AN population is steadily increasing AND diversifying, with more and more AI/AN individuals falling into the Hispanic and Two or More Races categories and therefore not being counted as American Indian/Alaska Native in federal or state demographic data outside the census reports.

Table 2. U.S. American Indian / Alaska Native (AI/AN) Population by Year

	1990	2000	2010	2020
AI/AN-Alone	1,959,234	2,475,956	2,932,248	3,727,135
AI/AN-Hispanic	165,461	407,073	564,870	1,359,217
AI/AN-Two or More	N/A	1,643,345	2,288,331	5,938,923
Total	2,124,695	4,526,374	5,785,449	11,025,275

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2010, 2020c



OMB Revisions and Updates

In 2024, OMB once again revised SPD 15 creating an additional federal race category (Middle Eastern/North African) and discontinuing the two-question format for identifying race and ethnicity demographic data (Office of Management and Budget [OMB], 2024). Under this newest revision (OMB-2024), Hispanic/Latino would now be a standalone race category, would no longer be required to be paired with one of the federal race codes, and would not automatically override race code data. Additionally, combining federal race codes would not automatically categorize an individual as Two or More Races. State and federal agencies, as well as education institutions, would now be required to keep disaggregated data for both of those categories to minimize the suppressive undercounting effect that prior data collection guidance had on individuals with complex racial and ethnic heritages. Full implementation of OMB-2024 is expected to be in place by 2029, with federal and state agencies tasked with determining how to deal with collecting disaggregated data for Hispanic and Two or More Race individuals. However, with changes at the federal level after the 2024 presidential election and the subsequent shift away from other policy work concerning race, ethnicity, diversity, and inclusion, full implementation of the OMB-2024 guidance may now be in limbo.

Tribal Membership, Legal Descendants, and Tribal Sovereignty

Despite the changes to race/ethnicity data collection that may be on the horizon with OMB-2024, neither the new guidance nor the current requirements under OMB-1997 and ED-2007 take tribal enrollment into account when considering the identification of AI/AN individuals at a state or federal level. While the 2010 census asked respondents to report their tribal enrollment, the collection of this data does not override OMB-1997 / ED-2007 rulesets which means an individual who is an enrolled member of a tribe or a legal descendant and has Hispanic/Latino ethnicity will only be considered as "Hispanic." Similarly, an individual who has AI/AN heritage and any other combination of federal races and is an enrolled member or legal descendant will only be considered "Two or More Races" in demographic datasets (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Despite tribal enrollment, membership, and descendancy status being legal forms of citizenship for tribal nations, being an enrolled or otherwise legal citizen of any state- or federally-recognized tribe does not override how race/ethnicity data is collected in this country.

In 2018, Washington State—under the directives of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)—implemented the collection of "state race" data as part of the PK-12 enrollment process (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI], 2017). Based on a 2017 report by the Race and Ethnicity Student Data Task Force led by Maria Flores, former Director of Title II Part A Programs and the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL), this initiative required districts to include "state races" (i.e. countries or cultures of origin) under each of the federal race and Hispanic/Latino ethnicity categories. For American Indian/Alaska Native, this included all federally-recognized tribes in Washington, all Washington State non-federally recognized tribes, and optional write-in categories. Data on state races was required to be collected upon initial school enrollment and recorded in school information systems under each student's demographic file. Student information system data for all districts directly feeds into the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS), the state's longitudinal reporting and enrollment database (OSPI, 2024a). This system, in turn, links to federal databases at the U.S. Department of Education, other data clearinghouses, and public facing data portals including the Washington State Report Card (Washington State Report Card, 2024).

As with other databases and data portals that are required to use race/ethnicity standards based on OMB-1997, CEDARS does not take into account state races or tribal enrollment and is reliant on binary logic formula created by the two-question format. This means that while granular state race / tribal enrollment data is collected at the school and district level, it is not reported or displayed at the state level with the same level of granularity. Instead, if one were to go to OSPI School Report card and look up data on a district and/or school, one would see student data that is filtered through the OMB-1997 and ED-2007 standards and is therefore highly inaccurate when it comes to multiracial and multiethnic students who have tribal membership but are not being recognized as American Indian/Alaska Native.

Title VI

One exception to the above uses of tribal enrollment—or lack thereof—for race/ethnic identification is the Title VI Indian Education program (Washington State Report Card, 2024; U.S. Department of Justice [DOJ], n.d.). This federally-based program provides funding through a formula grant to schools in order to address the academic, cultural, and language needs of AI/AN students (U.S. Department of Education, 2024). To qualify for the program, schools must enroll no fewer than 10 students or no less than 25% of their total student enrollment to be students who qualify for the program. Qualifying for the program requires students and their families to complete an Indian Student Eligibility Certification Form for Title VI (ED 506 form) (OSPI, 2024d). This form requires students to demonstrate proof of eligibility by either providing their membership card or enrollment number or proof of descendancy via a parent or grandparent who is/was an enrolled member. The exact type of evidence varies by tribe, with enrollment cards, Certificates of Indian Blood, letters of descendancy status, etc., all being viable options. Once this documentation is provided, an individual student can be enrolled in the Title VI program; and once the minimum threshold of students is met, the school and/or district is eligible for the formula grant.

Once enrolled in the Title VI program, schools and districts are required to provide data to the state Title VI program as well as engage in consultation with tribes located in the school / district community (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI], 2024d; U.S. Department of Education [ED], 2015). The requirements of both the Title VI program and tribal consultation mandate that schools provide data on all Title VI students regardless of their racial or ethnic makeup. Due to Title VI being an opt-in program and parents can refuse to participate, some districts run into the issue of having state- and federally-recognized Native students not enrolled in the Title VI program, while students who are multiracial or multiethnic and meet the qualifications for enrollment are. This leads to the almost paradoxical result of districts being required to report data on Title VI students who are recognized only as Hispanic and/or Two or More Races on a state and federal level, while potentially also having AI/AN students not enrolled in the program due to parent refusal or lack of proper documentation. With student demographic data reliant on OMB-1997 and ED-2007 standards and Title VI bypassing those standards completely to rely on tribal enrollment or descendancy status, this has led to a number of issues including under-identifying students who may qualify for Title VI programs and inaccurate data shared during tribal consultation.

The extent of this under-identification was subject of a research study conducted by the American Institute of Research and the Indigenous Education State Leaders Network (IESLN) (American Institutes for Research [AIR] & Indigenous Education State Leaders Network, 2023). This study, the Indigenous Student Identification (ISI) Project, examined the degree of undercounting for Native students across the country comparing Title VI counts on a per district basis with demographic data from the American Community Survey (ACS) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020c). Over a four-year period, this study determined that up to 70 percent of all AI/AN students across the country were undercounted in public education; and that for Washington State, the degree of undercounting was estimated to be nearly 36,000 students (AIR, n.d.).

As with other databases and data portals that are required to use race/ethnicity standards based on OMB-1997, CEDARS does not take into account state races or tribal enrollment and is reliant on binary logic formula created by the two-question format. This means that while granular state race / tribal enrollment data is collected at the school and district level, it is not reported or displayed at the state level with the same level of granularity. Instead, if one were to go to OSPI School Report card and look up data on a district and/or school, one would see student data that is filtered through the OMB-1997 and ED-2007 standards and is therefore highly inaccurate when it comes to multiracial and multiethnic students who have tribal membership but are not being recognized as American Indian/Alaska Native.

Table 3. Washington State Title VI Program: Title VI Formula Grant Allocation vs. ISI Project Counts			
	Total Student Counts	$ per Student	Total Allocation
23-24 Title VI Program	18,133	$322.82	$5,853,758.00
ISI Projected Undercount	35,909	$0.00	$0.00 (-$11,592,143.38)
Source: U.S. Department of Education, 2024			

Given that Washington's Title VI program in 2023-24 served over 18,000 students with a total grant allocation of just under $6,000,000, this is a staggeringly large degree of undercounting and potential loss of funding of nearly $12,000,000 annually to AI/AN serving school districts in the state. When the potential loss of funding to Native-serving education programs is coupled with the general under- and misidentification of AI/AN students due to the OMB-1997 and ED-2007 standards, it is clear in the data that policies being currently used at the state and federal level are leading to a massive equity gap for Native students.

OMB-1997 vs. Max Rep / Inclusive Counts

Under OMB-1997 standards, AI/AN identification is limited to individuals who selected "American Indian or Alaska Native" only, thereby excluding multiracial or multiethnic individuals from AI/AN-specific counts. This narrow way of classifying race/ethnicity data fails to consider tribal enrollment, descendant status, or multiethnic/multiracial heritage; and, therefore, under- or misidentifies many indigenous individuals. While some of these issues might be alleviated with the adoption of OMB-2024 standards, there are other more inclusive systems of categorizing race/ethnicity data that should be considered.

Maximum Representation

"Maximum representation" is a concept pioneered by Dr. Gene Kim, Director of Assessment and Research at the University of Washington's Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity (OMAD) (Kim, 2023). While completing postdoc work at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Dr. Kim had previously worked to create an algorithm that would be used to identify students who were enrolled in multiple major programs across different schools and colleges within the UW-Madison system. At the time, the systems used by the university had the tendency to aggregate multi-major students into broad categories or otherwise failed to identify students for scholarships or other opportunities due to only one degree program being recognized. Dr. Kim's work on this algorithm was later applied to his work at the University of Washington where he and Arlyn Arquiza (OMAD analyst) used the "multiple representation" algorithm with student race/ethnicity data to determine accurate counts for under- and misidentified students.

Conceptually, maximum representation is simple: If an individual belongs to one or more racial or ethnic groups, they must be counted in both groups simultaneously. For example, an individual who is White and Hispanic would be considered a member of both the "White" and "Hispanic" groups, while an individual who was AI/AN, Asian, and Hispanic would be counted in each group respectively. This system lifts the suppressive effects of the Hispanic and Two or Race classifications under ED-2007, but does lead to an issue of having duplicate counts. Since each multiracial or multiethnic individual would be counted once for each racial/ethnic group they were a member of, this system can greatly inflate total counts for systems that have a high population of individuals with diverse backgrounds.

Despite the issue of duplicate counts, inclusive categorization systems like maximum representation can be used to resolve some of the primary issues with the OMB-1997 and ED-2007 standards. By no longer filtering all demographic data through the overarching and exclusionary Hispanic and Two or More Races categories, data for multiracial and multiethnic individuals will no longer be suppressed. For AI/AN individuals, demographic systems that bypass the OMB-1997 and ED-2007 standards and utilize tribal enrollment as a key indicator will more authentically capture their identity as individuals culturally, racially, and politically. Therefore, there is a clear need for inclusive representation systems that go beyond the standards set by OMB-1997, ED-2007, or OMB-2024, which still fail to account for tribal enrollment and descendancy when assigning race and ethnic identity to individuals.

Implications for Data Privacy and FERPA

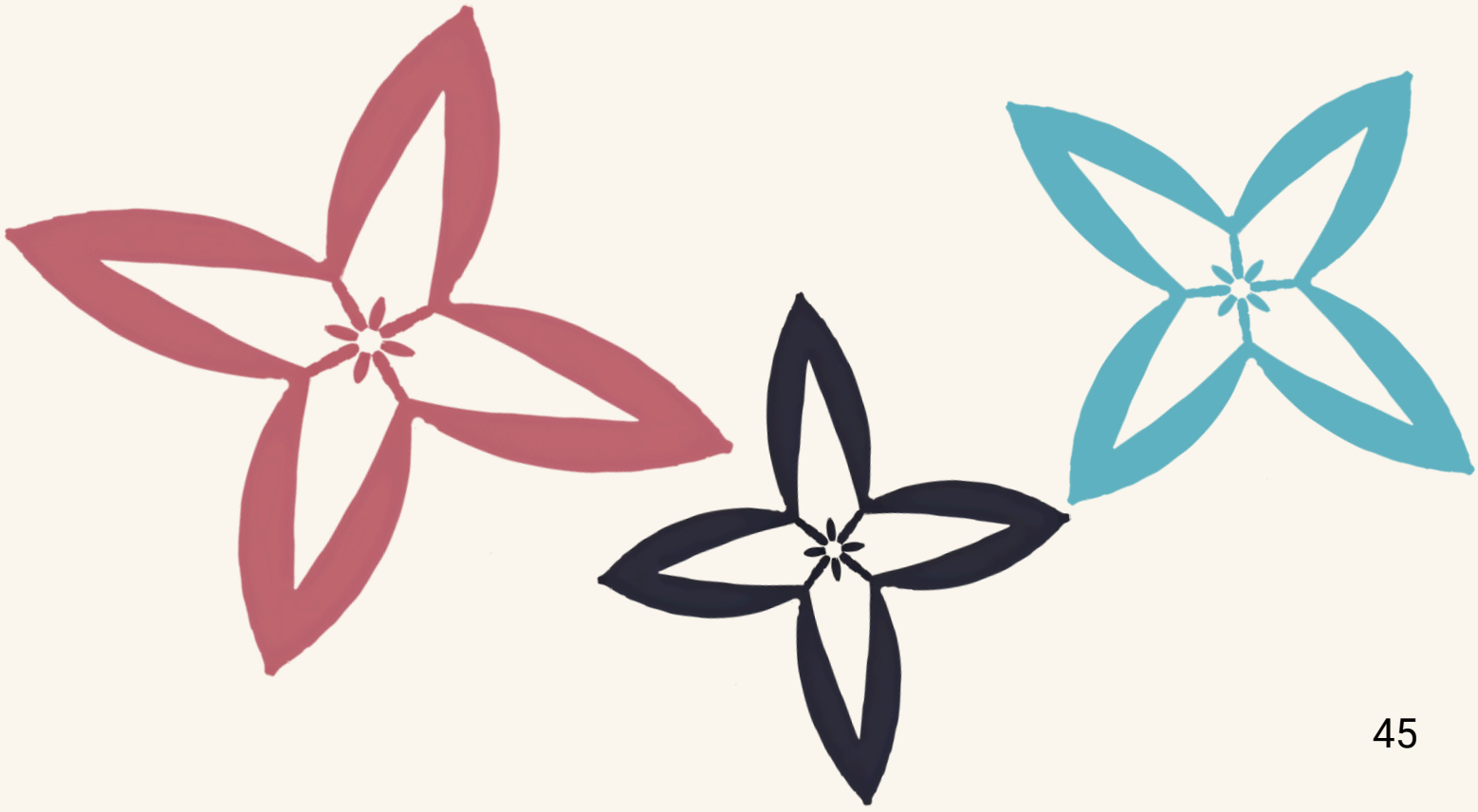
One potential challenge to this work is the implication gathering and using highly granular and individualized student demographic data when considering student privacy. School districts are well-versed in the requirements under FERPA for student privacy, but concerns have still arisen from tribal partners about use of sensitive student data (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). There has been a long history of abuse of Native data, ranging from using tribal roll data to identify children to be taken to boarding schools to the use of DNA for medical research without proper permission (Turtle Talk, 2010; U.S. Department of the Interior & Bureau of Indian Affairs [DOI & BIA], 2022). Considering these historical issues—historic only in the sense that they have happened in the past, but still occur in the present—as well as the current national political landscape and topics surrounding citizenship, identity, and diversity, it is clear that this is a hotbed issue and one with some serious privacy concerns and ramifications. Any shift towards inclusive demographic systems and student counts needs to take those concerns into account and ensure student privacy is still maintained while improving granular data collection.

The Impact of Inaccurate Data

From the data, it is clear that the reliance on OMB-1997 and ED-2007 standards has resulted in significant undercounting and misrepresentation of AI/AN individuals. The consistent mis- and under-identification of Native individuals has had wide ranging impacts on the accuracy of student data, with broad implications on how the use of inaccurate data might impact district and school operations. The use of inaccurate demographic data obscures the true performance of AI/AN students across multiple state-level achievement metrics, which further impacts school funding, program enrollment, and school/district improvement planning.

In 2024, the Office of Native Education (ONE) at OSPI conducted a review of state enrollment data and found that the degree of mis- and under-identification far exceeded the projected undercounting found by the ISI Project. Based on federal race codes, ONE found that the undercount of AI/AN students exceeded 50,000 students, most of whom were suppressed by the Hispanic ethnicity code.

Table 4. Washington State AI/AN Student Counts	
AI/AN - Only	19,063
AI/AN - Hispanic	30,014
AI/AN - Two or More Races	19,120
AI/AN - All Combinations	68,197
Source: OSPI, CEDARS Database (2023)	



Regional Counts

A further examination of regional data found similar trends, with undercounting exceeding 6,000 students in the Educational Service District 105 (ESD 105) region. Internal demographic data for districts in the ESD 105 region—most of whom border or are on the Yakama Indian Reservation—found similar degrees of mis- and under-identification of AI/AN students, largely confirming and exceeding the projections found by the ISI Project. Given the region's proximity to the Yakama Reservation, one of the largest reservations in Washington State in terms of geographic size and tribal membership (10,791 members as of September 30th, 2024), the degree of mis- and under-identified students in the area is troubling (Washines, 2024).

Table 5. Washington State AI/AN Student Counts, ESD 105 Region

District	AI/AN - Only	AI/AN - Hispanic	AI/AN - Two or More	AI/AN - All
Yakima	115	600	127	842
Toppenish	334	1766	37	2137
Wapato	580	422	57	1059
Mount Adams	452	251	39	742
ESD 105 Region	2194	4052	643	6889

Source: OSPI, CEDARS Database (2023)

In a report on enrollment counts, the Yakama Nation reported that 278 members were considered full Yakama blood (following blood quantum laws), 280 were three-quarters, 941 were half, 1,543 were one quarter and 7,749 were some combination of fraction percentages between one quarter and full blooded (Washines, 2024). Of those 10,000 plus members, approximately 6,000 were not being counted as AI/AN by local school districts due to having mixed heritage. While the Yakama Nation is not the only tribe with students in the region's schools, it is the predominant tribe in the area and the degree of undercounting when comparing school and tribal enrollment records serves to demonstrate how serious this issue is at a local level. It also begs the question—if the region surrounding the Yakama Nation is reporting 6,000 mis- or under-identified Native students, where are the remaining 49,000 undercounted AI/AN students?

State Achievement Metrics

Accurate student data is a critical component of K-12 Local Education Agency (LEA) operations. Schools and districts are required to collect, analyze, and plan around a variety of student data including attendance, discipline, graduation and retention rates, and standardized test score pass rates. State and federal grant programs, including Title I, Part A (Improving Basic Programs), Title I, Part C (Migrant Education), Title III, Part A (Multilingual Education), Title VI (Indian Education), the Learning Assistance Program (LAP), and others require documentation of student eligibility and student achievement, with student achievement being primarily measured by academic growth or proficiency on specific standardized assessments. Student eligibility can be tied to multiple factors, but for programs such as Title I, Part C and Title III, Part A—both of which have specific components that serve AI/AN students—students who are not automatically recognized as Native due to the reliance on OMB-1997 and ED-2007 standards may not be enrolled in the programs by school and district staff despite meeting the eligibility requirements. Unlike Title VI, where tribal enrollment is a primary factor for eligibility, these programs are reliant on identification through traditional demographic processes. If a school or district does not correctly identify a student as AI/AN who otherwise meets all the program qualifications, it is therefore highly likely that the student will not be enrolled in these programs. As with the issue of under enrollment in the Title VI program, this directly impacts funding opportunities for school districts. This also impacts data reporting, as the schools and districts are not reporting data on all potentially qualifying students, which in turn skews progress goals towards achievement metrics.

SIDEBAR 2. ELEMENTARY A, WASHINGTON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

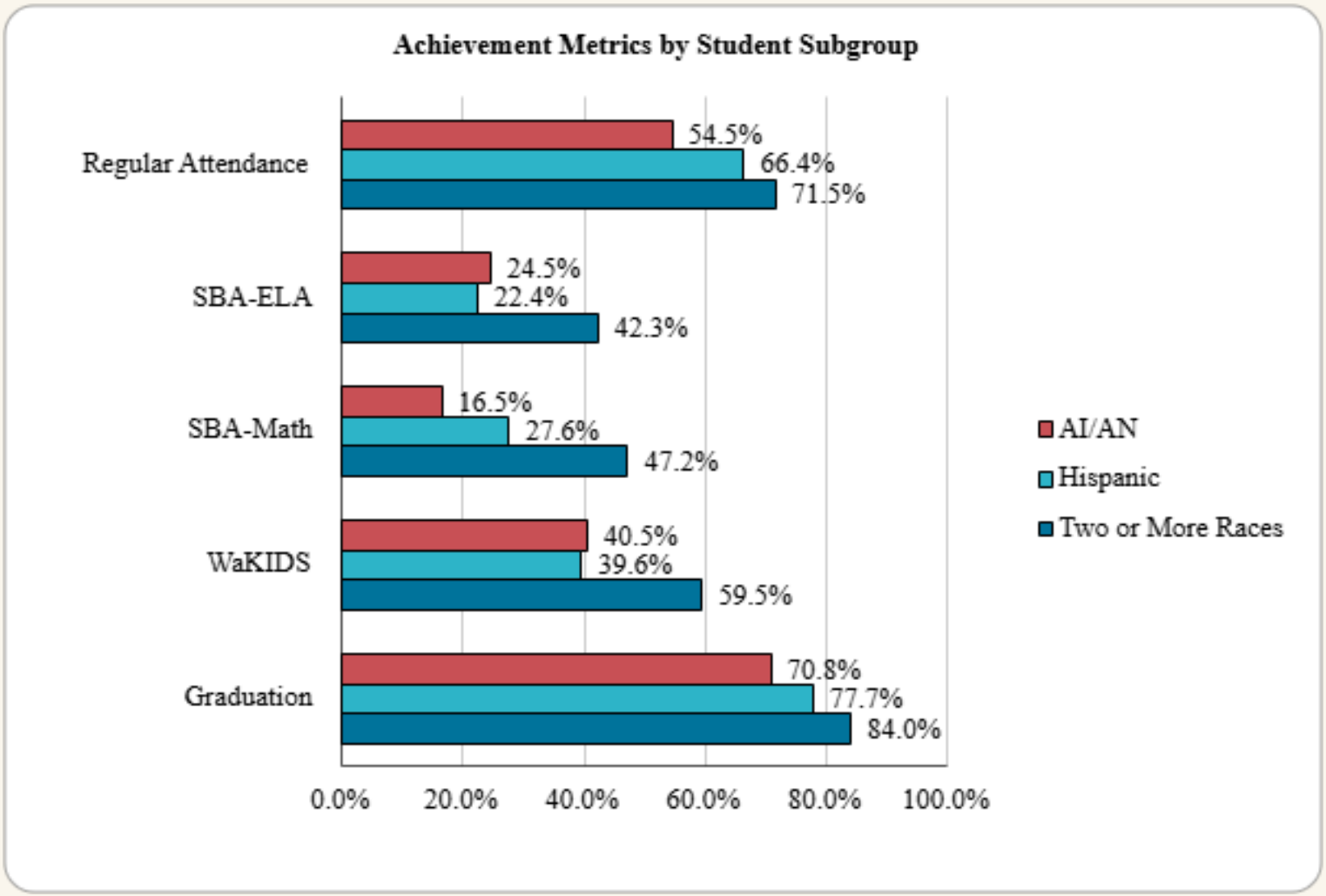
In 2022, Elementary A was identified for school improvement under the Washington School Improvement Framework (WSIF), specifically in three areas: regular attendance, Smarter Balanced English-Language Arts pass rates, and Smarter Balanced Math pass rates for AI/AN students. Each of these areas for AI/AN students fell under an identification threshold (2.19), with other student groups above that threshold in one or more areas. Over the next few years, Elementary A instituted programs to increase regular attendance (going from 60 percent in 2022 to 85 percent in 2024) and improve test scores.

In 2024, Elementary A was still in school improvement for AI/AN students on both regular attendance and SBA pass rates, while the school as a whole and other specific student subgroups were above the identification threshold. When the school analyzed demographic records, they found that over 65 percent of their AI/AN Title VI students were being misidentified as Hispanic or Two or More Races, both groups that were over the identification threshold by a large margin. When they recalculated their regular attendance and SBA pass rates for AI/AN students using an inclusive count system, they found that the gap between AI/AN and non-AI/AN students had closed significantly.

In 2025, Elementary A remained in school improvement. Despite internal data demonstrating not all AI/AN students were being correctly counted and that the majority of AI/AN students were being included in groups that far exceeded the identification threshold, the reliance on using demographic systems of identification based on OMB-1997 and ED-2007 standards by OSPI is leaving the building stuck in an ongoing improvement cycle.

Source: *Washington School Improvement Framework (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI], 2024e)*

Other areas where schools report data on achievement metrics—including graduation rates, student attendance, and standardized test score proficiency rates—are equally impacted by inaccurate student demographic data. Based on reports from OSPI's public-facing data dashboard (School Report Card), AI/AN students consistently underperform across multiple achievement metrics as compared to other student subgroups (Washington State Report Card, 2024). When directly compared to Hispanic and Two or More Race students in the areas of regular attendance, graduation rates, and standardized test scores, AI/AN students by and large demonstrate lower attendance and proficiency rates than the other student groups (see Chart 3).



However, this does not take into account the degree of mis- and under-identification of AI/AN students across the state. According to OSPI School Report Card, for the 2023-24 school year the state had 13,168 AI/AN, 288,238 Hispanic, and 100,099 Two or More Race students enrolled in K-12 education as of the 23-24 enrollment count date (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI], 2025; Washington State Report Card, 2024). Of those 388,337 Hispanic or Two or More Race students, approximately 55,000 (14.2%) may be AI/AN students who are mis- or under-identified. An increase in the state's AI/AN student population from 13,168 to 68,168 (1.2% to 6.2% of the state's total K-12 population of 1,100,059) and subsequent decrease in Hispanic and Two or More Race populations would likely result in similar shifts in achievement metrics. Without individual student data—both demographic and achievement metrics—it is not possible to determine the exact impact accurate AI/AN student identification would have on state, district, and school achievement metrics. However, given the degree of mis- and under-identification, it is a reasonable conclusion that the current data being used by the state for achievement metrics is not accurate and that the achievement gap between AI/AN and non-AI/AN students is likely much smaller than being reported.

Implications and Recommendations for Stakeholders

The mis- and under-identification of Native American students has serious consequences for students, families, districts, and tribes. Educational funding tied to student counts relies on accurate data. When Native students are misclassified, access to those funding sources for districts is limited and consequently, Native students have inequitable access to the programs and services those funds are dedicated to. This not only affects students directly by impacting educational services that are designed to help them meet school, district, and state achievement metrics, but further undermines tribal rights for self-determination and educational oversight.

Accurate data also impacts the recognition of treaty rights. Education is a protected right under many tribal treaties, and failure to serve Native American students equitably may constitute a treaty violation. Furthermore, when Native students are excluded from their cultural identity in educational systems, it creates barriers to engagement, belonging, and academic success. The integration of Native identity into educational systems—through inclusive data practices, culturally relevant curricula, and tribal consultation—can help close achievement gaps and support healing from historical and generational trauma.

Recognition of Native identity does not imply that the values and goals of schools and districts are irrelevant. Rather, there needs to be a reciprocal relationship between Native communities and Native-serving public education systems, to ensure a mutual understanding between all parties. Schools and districts have specific objectives for all students, often ones that are universally agreed upon to be important: increased graduation rates, increased postsecondary matriculation rates, high academic achievement, etc. Those objectives do not need to be at odds with what Native communities, parents, and students also find to be of value, but should be supportive of what Native students and families hold as valuable. This could mean recognizing various forms of achievement outside state achievement metrics or developing flexible systems that don't punish students for adhering to cultural practices. One only needs to look at statewide regular attendance initiatives and then look at the attendance rates for Native students who participate in traditional hunting, gathering, fishing, dancing, ceremonies, or funeral rites to see examples of misalignments between district objectives and the values of Native families (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI], 2024). One could also look at the multiple instances of districts and families clashing over the use of tribal regalia during graduation ceremonies, despite the matter being solidly and legally established by a bedrock of case law and state practices. Recognition of Native identity has proven time and time again to be a complicated issue that often puts schools, districts, families, and tribes at odds. It is clear a better path forward is needed for all parties.

Recommendations for Parents, LEAs, Tribes

To better ensure equitable access to educational resources and uphold tribal sovereignty for Native students, Washington State must adopt a consistent model for data sharing agreements between school districts and tribes. A statewide framework would support clear expectations for both districts and tribes, streamlining the implementation of improved data collection for districts and reinforcing the reciprocal relationships between educational institutions and tribal nations. This is critically important as educational accountability, funding, and wraparound support become increasingly data-driven, as without uniform practices, students and families are left navigating inconsistent systems that often overlook Native identity altogether.

Districts should conduct an annual review of race and ethnicity data and work directly with families to correct incomplete or inaccurate demographic files. When a student is identified as American Indian / Alaska Native—either alone or in any part—the Title VI coordinator or other district designee should follow up with the family. This outreach should include questions about tribal enrollment or descendant status, method of identification (e.g., blood quantum, self-identification, direct lineage), and whether or not the student and family identify as Native culturally. This step is not about gatekeeping services, but about understanding the student's lived identity and ensuring that tribal partners are appropriately engaged.

This is especially important for districts who are not in close proximity to tribal nations or for students who are attending districts that are not geographically near their tribe of origin and therefore may not be as readily identified as a tribal member or descendant. Current requirements for tribal consultation often default to proximity—limiting districts' responsibilities to the nearest tribe rather than those to which a student belongs. This approach fails to recognize the diversity of tribal affiliations within school systems. Districts must expand data sharing agreements to include all tribes represented in their student populations, regardless of geography. Doing so ensures accurate data collection for Title VI and other AI/AN-serving programs and supports the educational sovereignty of all tribal nations involved.

For tribes, enrollment offices can better facilitate partnerships between tribal nations and districts by identifying where their members are currently attending school and using that information to state the data-sharing process. This could be done through household address verification with enrolled members as part of an annual membership review of the tribe's rolls or census. Doing so would allow tribes to proactively reach out to districts, initiate data-sharing agreements, and ensure that Native youth are visible and supported in public education systems around the state. Tribal education offices should not be left to chase down this information after the fact, nor should school districts shoulder all the burden to identify and verify the enrollment status off all Native students they serve.

More needs to be done to ensure all systems of support for AI/AN students are interconnected. When Native students qualify for specific high-need programs—for example, the McKinney-Vento homeless program—districts need to do more than provide internal services. There needs to be a clear and consistent mechanism for notifying and coordinating services with students' tribal nations to ensure overlapping and interconnected supports are in place. Wraparound services that are rooted in culturally competent contexts can help fill in critical care gaps and prevent Native students from falling through the cracks on our social and educational systems.

Policy and Legislation Recommendations

The burden for all of this work does not fall solely on the shoulders of families, schools, districts, and tribes. The state legislature—and through them, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction—has a responsibility to ensure equitable access to education services and funding for all American Indian / Alaskan Native students and therefore has a duty to ensure that the systems in place to record, share, and use student data are accurate and meets the needs of all stakeholders. The following set of policy and legislative recommendations are not all-exhaustive, but should serve as a solid foundation for moving forward with this work.

1. Mandate Inclusive and Disaggregated Race/Ethnicity Data Practices

Amend state education policy to require the collection, reporting, and public display of race/ethnicity data using maximum representation or other inclusive demographic categorization principles. This would ensure that AI/AN-Hispanic or AI/AN-Two or More Race students, as well as any other marginalized, multiracial or multiethnic student of any group is fully and accurately represented in all demographic and achievement metrics, without being suppressed by current or future federal classification standards.

2. Standardized Statewide Tribal Data Sharing Agreements

Establish a legislated framework requiring all school districts to develop data sharing agreements with every tribal nation represented in their student body, not just those located within or near the district boundaries. This includes academic data that aligns with state achievement metrics, participation in programs such as CTE, dual credit / co-curriculars, as well as recognition programs that align with both district initiatives and tribal objectives. Developing this framework could be built off the existing government-to-government tribal consultation model as mandated by Title VI and ESSA but should be further strengthened to apply to all districts that serve Native students, even those with small populations that fall under the ESSA or Title VI requirement thresholds (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI], 2024d).

3. Require Annual Demographic Audits, Title VI Follow-Up, and SIS Alignment

Implement a statutory requirement that all districts conduct annual audits of student race/ethnicity data, with direct family outreach in cases of incomplete or ambiguous records. For any student who identifies as AI/AN in any part, follow-up must include outreach by a Title VI coordinator or designee to determine tribal enrollment, descendant status, and Title VI eligibility. Additionally, student information systems and state enrollment systems need to have better tools that align with annual auditing practices, visualization and reporting options that align with both Federal demographic requirements as well as inclusive identification systems, and the ability to cross-reference program enrollment (i.e. Title VI) with demographic data at both the local and state levels.

Concluding Thoughts

In closing, the accurate identification of Native students is not merely a technical exercise into the proficiency and usability of student identification policies and student data systems—it is a matter of educational equity, tribal sovereignty, and accountability. Our current data systems and demographic policies fail to reflect the full scope of what it means to be a Native individual—racially, culturally, politically—and the consequences of the continued use of these systems has led to a loss of funding for schools and districts, missed services for students, and the erosion of visibility of Native youth within public education. The recommendations outlined in this report are designed to close those gaps by strengthening data infrastructure, expanding tribal partnerships, and honoring the diverse ways Native peoples define their identity. Washington State has an opportunity to lead the nation in affirming the complex identity of AI/AN students within our schools.

This work means more than reducing students to a checkbox on a demographic file. This work requires that we build better systems and policies that reflect the complexity, strength, and value of Native identity. It asks us to recognize Native students in all their many forms, to build better partnerships with tribal nations, and to respect tribal sovereignty. It asks us to do better to ensure equitable access to Native-serving programs and promote student achievement in ways that align with state and district mandates as well as the goals and aims for tribes and tribal communities.

There are many unknowns ahead of those who take on this work and the tasks before them are not easy ones. They are, however, necessary.

Washington State Native Education Policy Advances, 2008-2025

From Where the Sun Rises (2008) increased momentum around Native American educational policy at a time it began to boom in the state of Washington. For instance, The Millennial Accord (1999) and Since Time Immemorial (JMLSTI, 2005) legislation were relatively recent measures approved through legislature or signed in agreement with the state. Many of the dreams of Tribal leaders and Native visionaries were just becoming a reality — the former a re-affirmation of the original Centennial Accord (1989), the latter in its earliest form (HB 1495) which "recommended" inclusion of tribal history, culture and government into K-12 social studies curriculum prior to "mandating" it by modifying the original legislation in 2015 (SB 5433). The following section summarizes key policy advances and financial investment in Native education and American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) student success from 2008 to 2025. Though the list is thorough, it does not represent the totality of legislation that has had positive impacts on Native communities and Tribal youth during this period.

Tribal Sovereignty and Government-to-Government Relations

Office of Native Education

The Office of Native Education (ONE) leads OSPI's Native education work supporting all Native students within the state of Washington. The office was formally established within OSPI by the 2011 Washington State Legislature with the passage of HB 1829: Creating an office of Native education within the office of the superintendent of public instruction, and codified as RCW 28A.300.105. The statute charges ONE with a range of duties including "assist[ing ...] districts in meeting the educational needs of AI/AN students; facilitate[ing] the development and implementation of curricula and instructional materials in Native languages, culture and history, and the concept of tribal sovereignty; [...and] work with all relevant agencies and committees to highlight the need for accurate, useful data that is appropriately disaggregated to provide a more accurate picture regarding American Indian and Alaska Native students."

Funding

ONE did not receive dedicated funding within the education section of the state budget until the 2015-2017 biennium. The office has since received steady funding from the legislature, with additional dollars added to the base funding in the 2023-2025 biennium to support targeted work around Native student literacy (2023 SB 5187, Section 501(1)(g) and 2024 SB 5950, Section 501(1)(g)).

"The inherent role of tribal homelands, waterways, and active centered tribal voices are essential in providing a culture-based education guided by time-honored tribal sovereignty, treaties, executive orders, resolutions, and indigenous ways of knowing."
- WSNAEAC bylaws

Washington State Native American Education Advisory Committee (WSNAEAC)

The budget proviso that funds ONE outlines additional duties for the office which, beginning in 2019, includes "convening the Washington State Native American Education Advisory Committee" (WSNAEAC). WSNAEAC "consists of 22 members nominated by tribes and tribal organizations to provide consultation with OSPI on matters and issues related to the well-being and achievement of American Indian and Alaska Native students who attend public, tribal compact, and tribal schools in Washington state." Under its current bylaws, one of WSNAEAC's key goals is to "collaborate with OSPI on education issues: review, advise, exchange of consultation, and in acknowledgement of tribal sovereignty, work in partnership with OSPI to further the goals of Native American Education through collaboration on education issues." This collaboration includes elevating key policy priorities to the State Superintendent and sharing policy updates with tribal leadership across the state. Many past and current members of WSNAEAC have been instrumental in the crafting and implementation of the legislation covered within this chapter.

Senator John McCoy (lulilaš) (Tulalip) - Blanket wrapping at Suquamish
Photo Credit: Denny Sparr Hurtado (Skokomish)

State-Tribal Education Compact Schools (STECs)

Authorized by the 2013 passage of then Representative John McCoy's HB 1134: Authorizing state-tribal education compact schools. State-Tribal Education Compact Schools (STECs) are intended to combat the high disengagement and drop-out rates among American Indian and Alaska Native students by allowing the state to enter into compacts with Washington tribes to create schools centered around tribal culture, history, identity, and ways of knowing. The opportunity to enter into such a compact is available to any and all federally recognized tribes within Washington and ONE is charged with assisting tribes in exploring this opportunity. Washington State currently operates eight STECs across the state which, by design, "operate with greater independence compared to traditional public schools. They have the freedom to innovate with their curricula and teaching methods while still being held accountable for academic results. STEC schools demonstrate local, tribally-controlled school systems."

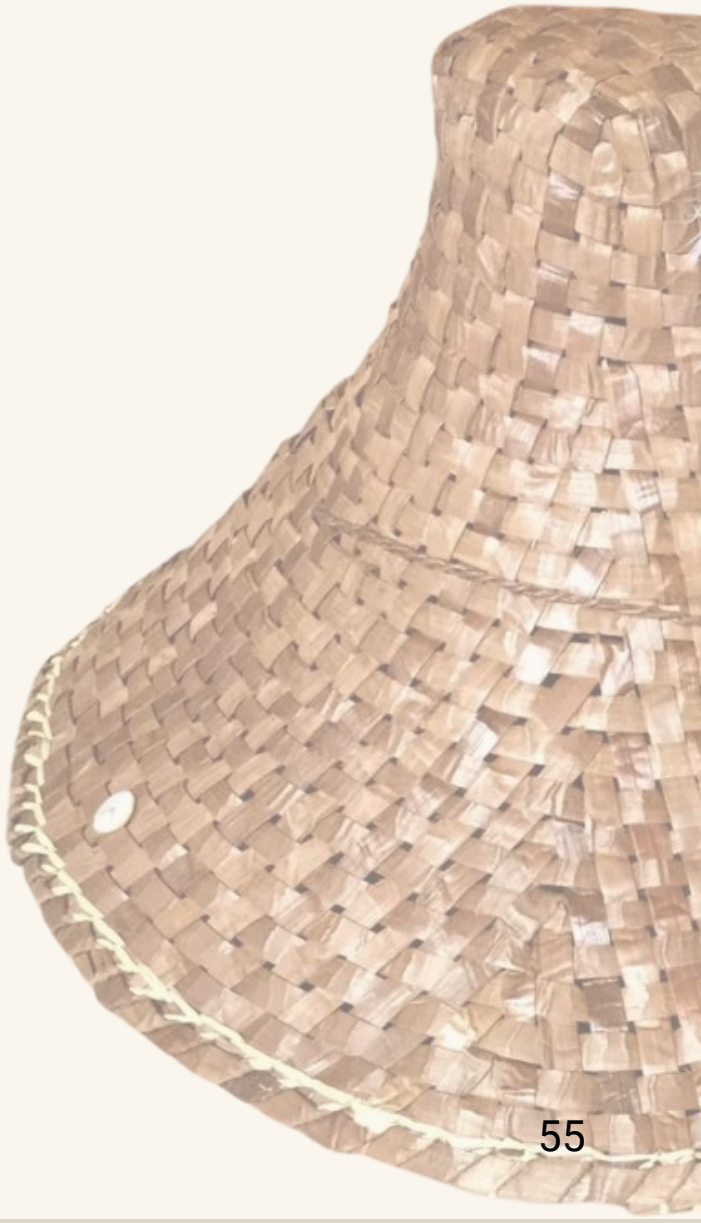
Tribal Consultation

Another important policy passed into state law is 2021 SB 5252: Concerning school district consultation with local tribes. Passed during the 2022 legislative session, this bill was initially conceived by Senator John McCoy, and carried forward after his retirement by Senate Early Learning and K-12 Committee chair Lisa Wellman. The bill directs OSPI, ONE, WSNAEAC, and the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) to work with the Tribal Leaders Congress on Education to develop and administer a tribal consultation training for school directors, district superintendents, and any other school district staff who engage in tribal consultation. The bill required these staff to certify completion of the training by September 1, 2024, with renewal required every three years thereafter. The bill also directs WSSDA to convene annual regional meetings between school district and tribal leaders to "establish government-to-government relationships and dialogue between councils and school district boards of directors [...and] discuss issues of mutual concern" including "the extent and nature of the achievement gap [experienced by American Indian and Alaska Native students] and strategies to close it; the importance of creating an inclusive educational environment where all Native students will receive educational resources and support required to have the opportunity to succeed in the pursuit of their educational goals; [and] ensur[ing] that school boards understand the importance of adopting curriculum that includes tribal experiences and perspectives."

John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial Curriculum

This report includes a chapter dedicated to the John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial Curriculum (JLMSTI), but the following highlights key policies between 2008 and the present day that have built upon the original 2005 legislation. Over the past two decades, state law has moved from a recommendation that students be taught tribal history and culture under then Representative John McCoy's 2005 HB 1495: Encouraging tribal history to be included in the common school curriculum, to making it a requirement of state law in 2015 SB 5433: Requiring Washington's tribal history, culture, and government to be taught in the common schools. In 2024, the curriculum was renamed in honor of its most ardent advocate, the late senator, with the passage of 2024 HB 1879: Naming the curriculum used to inform students about tribal history, culture, and government. Including the senator's traditional name marks the first time in Washington state history that tribal language has been included and permanently enshrined within state statute.

The 2024 Legislature included one-time funding in SB 5950, Section 522(3)(bb) for grants to school districts and tribes to support implementation and incorporation of JLMSTI into social studies curricula.



Inclusion of JLMSTI in Teacher Preparation Programs

Senator McCoy's 2017 SB 5028: Requiring teacher preparation programs to integrate Native American curriculum developed by the office of the superintendent of public instruction into existing Pacific Northwest history and government requirements passed the legislature in 2018, recognizing that it is equally important for all educators preparing to enter the teaching profession in Washington State, regardless of specialization or endorsement, be familiar with tribal sovereignty, tribal history, and tribal culture. While other investments have been made to instill this knowledge in the existing teacher workforce, this bill intended to eliminate that need in future by requiring exposure to the curriculum for all Washington teachers before entering the profession. Funding for implementation of this work was provided via 2018 SB 6032, Section 601(29) for the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), Section 602(37) for the University of Washington, Section 603(23) for Washington State University, Section 604(9) for Eastern Washington University, Section 605(10) for Central Washington University, and Section 607(12) for Western Washington University.

Implementation and Monitoring of Implementation of the JMLSTI Curriculum

While the requirement to teach JLMSTI has been state law since 2015, school districts are not required to incorporate the curriculum until they adopt new social studies curriculum. This timeline was intended to give school districts adequate time to bring JLMSTI to classrooms with the understanding that school districts update their curricula every few years. However, to date, adoption of JLMSTI is not universal; and two bills have come before the legislature in recent years to better support districts by establishing a clear deadline for implementation, along with directing OSPI and ONE to monitor implementation across the state and ensure that JLMSTI is being taught with fidelity.

Introduced by Representative Debra Lekanoff, 2023 HB 1332: Supporting public school instruction in tribal sovereignty and federally recognized Indian tribes did not pass the legislature during the 2023-2025 biennium. However, the bill did receive strong and nearly universal support from lawmakers any time it came up for a vote. In 2025, newly reelected Senator Claudia Kauffman introduced 2025 SB 5570: Supporting public school instruction in tribal sovereignty and federally recognized Indian tribes, accompanied by a companion bill introduced by Representative Lekanoff in the House, HB 1894. SB 5570 also received support from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, passing the Senate by a vote of 35 to 14, and then passing the House Education Committee unanimously. While SB 5570 did not pass the 2025 legislative session, the bill will be introduced back into the process when the 2026 legislative session begins in January of next year.

Tribal Language Education

Language lies at the heart of culture and the accumulation and sharing of knowledge between the generations. As recently stated by then-governor Jay Inslee, "among our nation's darkest stains is the boarding school system that the U.S. government used to erase Tribal language and culture under the harmful pretext of assimilation." Preserving Native language is essential to preserving Native ways of knowing, strengthening, and celebrating tribal culture and identity, and empowering Native peoples and communities to seek healing through the traditional medicines that have kept them healthy for generations. Tribal leaders have consistently elevated to state leaders the importance of language revitalization and the key role K-12 tribal language instruction plays in supporting the resurgence of Native culture in Washington schools and communities and the academic and social emotional well-being of Native students.

Though it falls just outside the period covered in this report, it is important to include the landmark legislation passed in 2007, SB 5269: Establishing the First Peoples' Language, Culture, and Oral Traditions teacher certification program. This bill, formally supported by numerous lawmakers including Senator Claudia Kauffman, recognizes the importance of Indigenous knowledge generally and the fact that Native culture and language can only be authentically taught through the unique and specialized knowledge and lived experience of Native peoples.

Washington State has supported multilingual education for all Washington students for many years, and OSPI program staff have directed some of the funds allocated for multilingual learning to tribal language education, working with lawmakers to explicitly include tribal language education in state budget language beginning in 2022 with supplemental budget proviso SB 5693, Section 522(9)(a).

> "'Tribal language education' means the revitalization of and instruction in tribal languages in public schools, developed in consultation with Washington's federally-recognized tribes and federally-recognized tribes with reserved treaty rights in Washington, and provided by a certificated teacher with a Washington state first peoples' language, culture, and oral tribal traditions endorsement established under RCW 28A.410.045." -2023 HB 1228.

In 2023, Representative Lilian Ortiz-Self introduced HB 1228: Building a multilingual, multiliterate Washington through dual and tribal language education, which passed the legislature unanimously the following year. This bill, supported by a budget request from OSPI and designated as OSPI request legislation, affirmed and solidified state support for tribal language education, elevating it from the temporary world of biennial budget provisos to codification within RCW, ensuring that the program will exist regardless of the availability of state funding. HB 1228 included the first legal definition of Washington tribal language education and created a separate state grant program specifically to support tribal language education and revitalization in Washington State.

Launching in September of 2024, the tribal language education grant received 26 applications. Applicants demonstrated commitment to building and maintaining strong government-to-government relationships with their local federally-recognized tribes, submitting MOUs attesting to formal partnership between school districts and tribes.

> "The sole expertise of sovereign tribal governments whose traditional lands and territories lie within the borders of the state of Washington in the transmission of their indigenous languages, heritage, cultural knowledge, histories, customs, and traditions should be honored."
> -2007 SB 5269

Professional Learning for Educators, School Administrators, and School Board Directors

Professional learning opportunities for school staff, from educators to school administrators, school leaders, and school board members, is essential for successful implementation of Native education policies, and several bills and budget provisos have directed resources toward and outlined requirements around professional learning. ONE administers professional learning for school district staff under three legislative directives, ensuring that an increasing number of educators and school district leaders are familiar with the concepts of tribal sovereignty and government-to-government relationships, are better prepared to understand the unique needs of and support Native students, and able to lead strong government-to-government practices within their schools.

JLMSTI Professional Learning

Most educators who teach JLMSTI are not Native, and did not have the benefit of JLMSTI instruction during their own K-12 education journeys. These educators deserve and need professional development and support in grasping the important histories, stories, and learnings laid out through the curriculum. Since it was first funded in the 2018 supplemental budget, ONE's budget proviso explicating directs the Office to use funding to "extending professional learning opportunities to provide instruction in tribal history, culture, and government," and by 2025 ONE has trained thousands of Washington teachers in JLMSTI instruction.

Government-to-Government and Tribal Consultation for Administrator and Teacher Certificate Renewals

Along with 2021 SB 5252 referenced above, the 2021 Legislature passed HB 1426: Specifying minimum continuing education requirements for administrator and teacher certificate renewals that focus on equity-based school and classroom practices. Sponsored by House Education Chair Sharon Tomiko-Santos, this bill specified that 5 percent of the professional learning school administrators are required to complete to renew their administrative certificates must "focus on government-to-government relationships with federally recognized tribes [...} provided by one or more subject matter experts approved by the governor's office on Indian affairs in collaboration with the tribal leaders congress on education and the office of Native education in the office of the superintendent of public instruction."

Supporting American Indian and Alaska Native Student Success

Alongside the key policies described above, a number of important laws have been passed since 2008 that support Native student success through recognition of tribal sovereignty, celebration of Native culture across Washington schools, and targeted investment in the safety and well-being of AI/AN students.

Tribal Regalia at Graduation Ceremonies

One of the most important laws to pass during this period is 2020 HB 2551: Permitting students to wear traditional tribal regalia and objects of cultural significance at graduation ceremonies and related events. Introduced by Representative Lekanoff during her first term, this bill recognizes graduation as a formal ceremony within the state's K-12 system, making it a powerful and sacred space that carries great weight and significance within our shared culture. This landmark legislation supports the legal privileges attached to the sovereignty of Native students, stating that the western traditions and protocols attached to graduation dress codes "are not appropriate in the context of government-to-government relationships and do not recognize the distinct and unique cultural heritage of Native Americans."

Elimination of Inappropriate Use of Native American Mascots

Another law introduced by Representative Lekanoff and adopted by Washington State is 2021 HB 1356: Prohibiting the inappropriate use of Native American names, symbols, or images as public school mascots, logos, or team names. This bill required all school districts on or adjacent to tribal reservations or traditional native lands to consult with their nearest federally-recognized tribes before continuing use of any school mascots using Native American names, images, or symbols, and discontinuing use if the tribe indicated through consultation that the mascot must change. The bill provided funding to school districts that changed their mascots following these consultations, directing OSPI to administer that grant program. Leaving the final decision around each mascot to the local federally-recognized tribes honored the sovereignty of those nations, the result of those consultations varied across the state. Some tribes rejected mascots in their entirety, while others wanted to see changes, and some, due to the particular histories of their communities and mascots, chose to continue forward with those names and mascots. The consultation process unearthed and elevated the need for more comprehensive tribal consultation for school district leaders. A total of 29 school districts applied for grant funding to come into compliance with 2021 HB 1356.

Early Learning and Literacy

Early Learning

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) received funding in 2022 via *SB 5693*, Section 229(29) to "implement an infant and early childhood mental health consultation initiative to support tribal child care and early learning programs."

DCYF also received funding in 2024 SB 5950, Section 229(25) for "tribal early learning grants to be distributed to providers with tribal children enrolled in early childhood education and assistance program, early ECEAP, childcare, head start, early head start and home visiting programs."

Native Student Literacy

Originally included as a section of 2023 HB 1228, a budget proviso supporting Native student literacy was added to the ONE base proviso SB 5187, Section 501(1)(g) when the bill failed to pass during its first legislative session. The proviso directed OSPI, through ONE, to convene a workgroup that would "conduct tribal consultations, develop best practices, engage in professional learning, and develop curricula and resources that may be provided to school districts and state-tribal education compact schools to serve American Indian and Alaska Native students with appropriate, culturally affirming literacy supports."

In its first year, this proviso funded the identification and recruitment of literacy experts and Native American educators and those from districts with high populations of Native American students, district leaders and Native language experts to convene to analyze data and discuss best practices. Funding also allowed ONE to host two Native Parent Literacy Nights, using Native storytelling to center education and cultural values, surveyed parents, distributed Indigenous authored books to attendees. Finally, funding allowed for an in-person meeting of over 50 Native literacy leaders in May of 2024.

Post-secondary Education and Graduation Pathways

Supporting Native Student Engagement in Career and Technical Education (CTE)

Funding was added to the Washington State operating budget in 2020 for a position within OSPI to "facilitate access to and support enrollment in career connected learning opportunities for tribal students, including career awareness and exploration, career preparation, and career launch programs, as defined in RCW *28C.30.020*, so that tribal students may receive high school or college credit to the maximum extent possible." This staff position leads agency work around the development of high quality and culturally relevant CTE programs, CTE graduation pathways, and Career-connected Learning (CCL) opportunities for tribal youth.

Clean Energy Workforce Pipeline

The 2024 State Legislature funded SB 5950, Section 130(22) directing the Washington State Department of Commerce to "support a tribal clean energy innovation and training center in partnership and co-located at Northwest Indian College. The center aims to support tribal energy goals and pursue clean energy deployment opportunities that enhance tribal energy sovereignty and well-being among tribes."

Native Representation and Leadership in Institutes of Higher Education

In 2022, three provisos for the Evergreen State College, (SB 5693 Section 60798-10) funded additional faculty for the College's Native American and indigenous programs, an assistant director position for the College's Native pathways program, and a tribal liaison position.

Addressing American Indian and Alaska Native Student Health Crises

Finally, the State has made several investments to support the mental health of Native youth and address specific health crises that disproportionately affect the Native American and Alaska Native student populations and tribal communities.

Suicide Prevention

Beginning in 2020 under 2020 SB 6168, Section 229(61), the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) was directed to lead behavioral health and suicide prevention efforts that support "tribes in developing and implementing culturally appropriate, evidence-based programs and tribal best practices to support youth and adults."

In 2022, the State's Health Care Authority (HCA) received Federal Coronavirus Response and Recovery Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) dollars to support Native mental health through SB 5693, Section 215(45)(c).

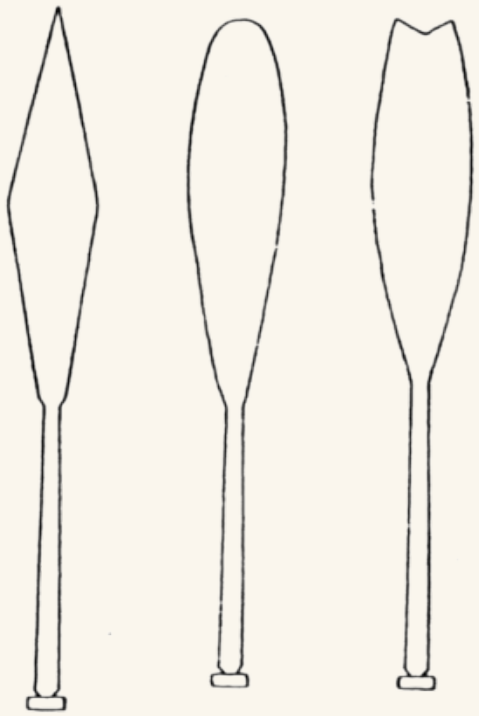
Also in 2022 under SB 5693, Section 215(107), the HCA was allocated funding to "provide a grant to develop an integrative cultural healing model to be implemented and managed by the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation."

The state's 2024 supplemental operating budget included two years' funding in the K-12 education section for the Nooksack tribe to provide behavioral health services to the Mount Baker School District through SB 5950, Section 522(4)(u).

Opioid Overdose Prevention and Education

The 2022 Legislature directed Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRSSA) dollars to the HCA via SB 5693, Section 215(42)(d) to support opioid addiction recovery for Native Americans and fund tribal opioid prevention campaigns.

In 2024, the legislature provided one-time funding for OSPI to administer a pilot program supporting opioid and fentanyl abuse prevention materials and recourses in STECs and tribal after school programs. Through this funding, ONE recommended The Healing of the Canoe (HOC) curricula, a substance abuse prevention program that is rooted in traditional teachings and ways of life and developed in partnership between the University of Washington and the Suquamish Tribe. Using "a train-the-trainer opportunity participating grantees [can] strengthen their knowledge around HOC [and] not only implement this curriculum, [but] train other staff within their school who will take part in the implementation of the HOC curriculum."



Legislation in Action:
John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial:
Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State Curriculum Implementation

"We wish to express our gratitude to everyone who participated in the listening sessions and interviews that contributed to this reflection. We also thank all those involved in developing, supporting, and implementing the JMSTI curriculum and programming, creating opportunities through collaboration for our students and communities to learn about our rich tribal culture, land, and peoples. We raise our hands to you!"

Twenty years ago, in response to the call from Tribal leaders to address the persistent educational opportunity gap that American Indian and Alaska Native students experience within the K-12 education system, the late Senator John McCoy, then Representative McCoy, with support of his fellow legislators, Denny Sparr Hurtado, OSPI Office of Native Education (ONE), and Tribal leaders and citizens across our region, passed House Bill 1495 establishing what we now know as the *John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State curriculum* (throughout this section, the curriculum will be referred to as JMLSTI). Section 1 of the 2005 legislation states,

It is the intent of the legislature to promote the full success of the Centennial Accord, which was signed by state and tribal government leaders in 1989. As those leaders declared in the subsequent Millennial Accord in 1999, this will require ***"educating the citizens of our state, particularly the youth who are our future leaders, about tribal history, culture, treaty rights, contemporary tribal and state government institutions and relations and the contribution of Indian nations to the state of Washington."***

Further,
The legislature recognizes that this goal has yet to be achieved in most of our state's schools and districts. As a result, Indian students may not find the school curriculum, especially Washington state history curriculum, relevant to their lives or experiences. In addition, many students may remain uninformed about the experiences, contributions, and perspectives of their tribal neighbors, fellow citizens, and classmates.

Additionally,
The legislature further finds that the lack of accurate and complete curricula may contribute to the persistent achievement gap between Indian and other students.

Finally,
The legislature finds there is a need to establish collaborative government-to-government relationships between elected school boards and tribal councils to create local and/or regional curricula about tribal history and culture, and to promote dialogue and cultural exchanges that can help tribal leaders and school leaders implement strategies to close the achievement gap.

When the Tribal sovereignty, history, and culture curriculum legislation passed in 2005, students who were 5 years-old and in kindergarten are now 25 years-old accepting the full responsibility of leadership with their families and communities foretold in the legislation's statement of intent.

In my journey to help lead the development of the 'Since Time Immemorial Curriculum' for the State of Washington, I realized this was and is a collaborative effort between the Washington Tribes and the State. This effort took a lot of people, both tribal and non-tribal to make the JMLSTI curriculum a reality. We understand that one of the key pillars needed is to focus on developing better relationships between the State and local governments, which hasn't been good; and there was little trust. Once we, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's Office of Native Education (ONE) developed the curriculum, we then provided STI training, explaining how the curriculum works and the best way to work with tribes in the development of these educational programs. Relationships are key to our existence, our relationships with Mother Earth, with our own families, friends, co-workers, educational and political organizations and school districts. Once these relationships are strengthened, then good things happen!

It's all about relationships... relationships... relationships!

Denny Sparr Hurtado (Skokomish) - Former Director of ONE

Denny Sparr Hurtado (Skokomish), former Director, OSPI Office of Native Education

Tribal leaders, educators, and subject matter experts have expressed heartfelt gratitude for John McCoy (lulilaš) and the Since Time Immemorial curriculum, and former Senator McCoy's outstanding life and advocacy for Native American education policy. Further, the dedication shown by our tribal leaders, the state, and the OSPI Office of Native Education (ONE) is truly inspiring. This curriculum empowers tribal administrators and educators to learn about the rich connections of tribal nations to their lands, traditional languages, oral histories, ways of life, and inherent rights to education. It also highlights their profound contributions to teaching and learning methods. These approaches enrich not just Native American students but all learners. It is essential for all school administrators and educators to recognize that JMLSTI encompasses the history of the Pacific Northwest—guiding us in understanding our lands' past, nurturing our future responsibly, and honoring those who have long cared for these lands while continuing their service with sacrifice and advocacy for our communities' futures.

In the 20 years, between 2005 and 2025, of the development and implementation of the JMLSTI curriculum what has been learned? What progress have we made in our relationship building and implementation? And what more is there for us to do, with urgency?

As we journey through these guiding questions, key take aways from the listening sessions and storied illustration of emerging promising practices will be highlighted.

I want to support the ways that education can be healing for our people, which includes decolonizing the curriculum and centering the voices of Indigenous people.
- Tleena Ives, former Director of Tribal Relations for the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families

Listening Session Summary: Knowing and Appreciating Our Tribal History

Understanding and learning about the Tribal history of education, treaty rights, executive orders, and the origins of the United States, along with who has cared for our land since time immemorial, is almost as important as learning about your own family ties and histories. The U.S. Department of Education recently sent a letter reinforcing the importance of our Tribal history and cultural teachings. Unfortunately, there is a history of miseducation. The older generation of students relied on their families to share their Tribal history and language. Many of us who now serve as leaders and educators had parents or grandparents who attended boarding schools, where their culture and language were beaten out of them or stripped away through shame tactics. To this day, many of us feel shame in learning about our culture and language rather than confidently carrying and passing it on. This is why legislation and policy are essential. Because it was stripped away in boarding schools and other ways, Native American students and all communities will only heal as it is restored. The healing of Native American peoples will also bring healing to our country because they embody strong value of reciprocity and giving.

Intentional effort on behalf of the 29 federally-recognized Tribes and Tribes whose traditional lands and waters are within Washington State, districts, school and classroom educators, state and regional education partners to cultivate relationships, learn, and develop and implement tribal sovereignty and history curriculum these past twenty years is evident in that the curriculum's implementation continues to be an ongoing focus within education across our regions. In this state, governance of curriculum implementation occurs at the local level, district by district. As each of the 295 school districts across our state and the 8 State-Tribal Education Compact schools implement tribal sovereignty, history, and culture curriculum, it is not one implementation, but rather 303 implementations required be done in collaboration with the Tribe or Tribes on whose ancestral lands and waters our schools reside. With respect to government-to-government relationships between federally-recognized Tribes and Washington state, the legislation requires districts to collaborate with the federally-recognized Tribe nearest their schools (and in some instances, this may be across the waters), but does not prohibit relationship building and collaboration with other tribal groups near their schools.In 2017, with the passage of Senate Bill 5028, teacher preparation programs are now required to integrate Native American curriculum developed in collaboration with Tribes and OSPI's Office of Native Education into existing Pacific Northwest history and government requirements. This implementation includes an additional 35 institutions who prepare and certify classroom educators. Here are some high-level learnings to more fully appreciate the context of our efforts toward fulfillment of this legislative opportunity.

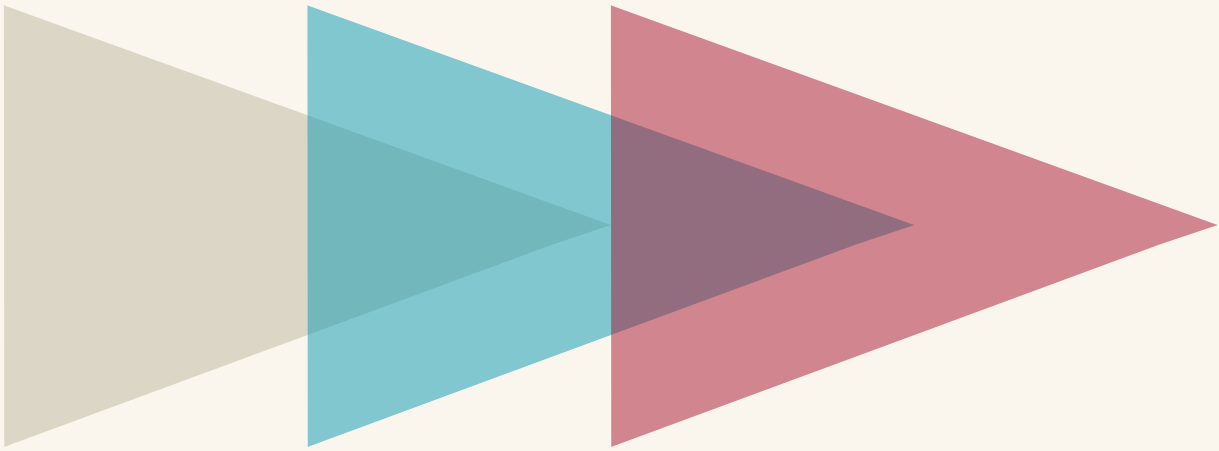
1) Implementing tribal sovereignty curriculum is not a technical issue with "known" solutions that adhere to linear prescriptive step-by-step processes. It is rather deeply adaptive work of complexity that requires ***individual and institutional growth and commitment*** in collaboration and relationship building toward co-management and power sharing between Tribes, districts, school and classroom educators, and families.

2) Implementing tribal sovereignty curriculum requires activation, collaboration, and a sustained commitment to growth across multiple layers and levels of tribal government, state institutions, district structures, and classroom practices. Our structures and practices are designed to sustain a certain balance or "status quo." In the case of our public school system, the "status quo" of western-centric education has denied, for many generations, the opportunity of culturally-responsive education for Native scholars, while depriving all students the opportunity to learn our shared histories in truthful ways. Implementation of the tribal sovereignty, history, and culture curriculum requires that we re-commit and engage in the intentional and careful disruption of the "status quo" while ***transforming and creating new sustainable and inclusive structures and practices*** that lead to equitable educational outcomes through our relationship-building, collaboration, co-management, and power sharing.

3) Transformation of our education structures and practices begins with a "readying" and "steadying" for transformation. This work is deeply process-centered and includes grief (letting go of that which is familiar) and healing (reclaiming our humanity). The call of transformative educational action outlined in the tribal sovereignty, history, and culture curriculum project requires ***inter-generational transformative leadership*** in our governments, institutions, districts, and classrooms to build and sustain this work.

4) Individual and institutional transformation requires ***feedback*** that reflects change and growth that can guide ongoing and future efforts.

With these perspectives in mind, let's now reflect on progress and impacts of our courageous work and journey these past twenty years.



What progress have we made? What impacts are being realized?

In response to questions focused on progress and impact of implementation of the curriculum, it is necessary to consider several categories which require distinct and ongoing attention and which intersect to create what becomes the curriculum's implementation. These categories include:

1) ***Relationship building*** toward co-management and shared power within education between Tribes, districts, state education institutions, and other partners.

2) ***Collaborative curriculum development***.

3) ***Professional learning*** in collaboration with Tribal partners for educators and policymakers that allows for biases and misunderstandings to surface, while developing deep connections and understandings to facilitate place-based, inquiry-based, and multimodal learning. Unlike other curriculums, it is Tribal people who are the content and pedagogical "experts." While educators bring understanding of lesson design and instructional practice, these practices are sometimes in conflict with Tribal values and traditional approaches, since time immemorial, to teaching and learning. This is a space of deep and liberatory learning for many educators.

4) ***System capacity building*** for sustainable growth through policy, funding, staffing, and leadership.

5) ***Ongoing monitoring and evaluation***, not merely "of" implementation, but "for" continued growth and implementation.

Appendix C is a timeline outlining key events at the state and federal levels impacting the implementation of the Tribal sovereignty and history curriculum. Again, each Tribe and each school district has its own timeline to reflect their regional and local work.

The curriculum's implementation is to be understood through the lens of two distinct time periods: 2005-2015 and 2015-present. The language of the initial 2005 legislation encouraged districts to implement the Tribal sovereignty, history, and culture curriculum and relationship building. After a decade of effort, only about 1/3 of districts across the state had participated in training offered by ONE. Implementation efforts staggered across the state. New legislation, Senate Bill 5433, passed in 2015 amending the language from encouraged to required, reflecting both the urgency and necessity of integrating Tribal sovereignty, history, and culture curriculum into all schools across the state.

1. ***Relationship building toward co-management and shared power.***

Listening Session Summary: The JMLSTI Curriculum is Just a Foundation

As project leads, we had the privilege of engaging in listening sessions to learn how tribes partnered with schools to enrich the school experience and develop the mandatory JMLSTI curriculum. It is the tribal partnerships and relationships that created transformative learning spaces for Native American students and beyond. Therefore, it is vital for schools to utilize the JMLSTI curriculum creatively in partnership with tribal partners to explore educational opportunities that extend beyond the curriculum. Most tribes are eager to partner and invest in this space to educate and build relationships with those who serve their students. These relationships will strengthen teachers and schools. An exemplar is when schools or districts create a JMLSTI committee that includes key members from the school and regional tribes. Creative learning opportunities and curriculum can be developed in these groups without placing excessive pressure on individual teachers. Where possible, document these curricula and practices so they are easily accessible to future educators.

2005-2015

- With the 2005 passage of HB 1495 encouraging districts to implement Tribal sovereignty and history curriculum, Denny Sparr Hurtado, Director of the OSPI Office of Native Education, made personal visits to Tribes across the region to share information about the new legislation and gather support for initial phases of implementation. Two essential outcomes resulted from his collaborations:

2006 Memorandum of Agreement between the Tribal Leader Congress on Education, Washington State School Directors Association, the State Board of Education, and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction outlining each party's responsibility and support of implementation of HB 1495.

Development and development of the video "A Shared History: HB 1495" discussing the experiences of Native students in our public schools and the hope of the implementation of Tribal sovereignty and history curriculum.

- At the local level, the first decade of implementation could be characterized as "figuring it out." Reaffirmation, commitment, and establishment of agreements between Tribes and districts. In some instances, such as the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and the Port Angeles School District, this was reaffirmation of commitments. In most instances, this was new work for both Tribes and districts and required learning and capacity building of both to grow and sustain agreements and relationships.

- As districts worked on "figuring this out," district leaders reached out and leaned on Indian Education Title VI Program leaders to guide and support relationship building. Although, the implementation of the curriculum was and is intended to involve participation of Indian Education Title VI leaders, it is not the sole responsibility of the Indian Education program leaders to implement the curriculum. Further education with districts was required to affirm the district's foundational responsibility to dedicate attention of structures and professional development as other districtwide curriculum adoptions, with the additional responsibility of developing relationships to do this work in collaboration with the nearest Tribe or Tribes.

2015–2025

- In 2015, Senate Bill 5433, now RCW 28A.320.170, passed requiring districts to implement the Tribal sovereignty and history curriculum.

- The passage of Senate Bill 5028 in 2017 required teacher preparation programs (TPPs) to integrate Native American curriculum developed in collaboration with Tribes and OSPI's Office of Native Education into existing Pacific Northwest history and government requirements, increased further responsibilities of Tribes and 35 education institutions to engage and coordinate agreements and relationships. Initially, this sent our TPPs into a "figuring it out" phase and placed additional capacity needs on Tribes. Lessons learned from the K-12 curriculum implementation has accelerated relationship building on the part of TPPs, many of whom have established government-to-government capacity within their organizations (i.e. Office of Tribal Affairs).

- On December 10, 2015, the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced No Child Left Behind (NCLB). ESSA is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. ESSA became fully operational in school year 2017–18. ESSA Tribal consultation is required by all districts receiving Title VI Indian Education Grant Awards of more than $40,000 and/or that have a Native American student population of over 50 percent (ESEA section 1111(a)(1)(A)). Tribal consultation is required for all Title programs covered by ESSA, not solely Title VI – Indian Education. In many instances, Tribes include progress updates of the JMLSTI curriculum implementation as part of the ESSA consultation.

- Impact of COVID-19. Because in-person gatherings were not possible and schools necessarily closed during the pandemic, relationship-building was impeded. Although online meetings could and did occur, many Tribal liaisons dedicated to this work needed to turn their attention toward directly serving their communities. We emerged from the pandemic to resume our relationship-building with a deeper sense of appreciation of each other and the importance of gathering and coming together to attend to our shared work.

- In 2021, the legislature acknowledged the need for accountability and maintaining meaningful Tribal Consultation and passed two pieces of legislation: House Bill 1426 and Substitute Senate Bill 5252 in support of the ESSA requirements. Both of these pieces of legislation connect with and strengthen relationship building activities, emphasizing co-management and power sharing necessary for full implementation of the JMLSTI curriculum.

1. HB 1426: Effective July 1, 2023, to renew an administrator certificate continuing education includes a focus on government-to-government relationships and to renew a teacher certificate continuing education must include equity-based school practices.
2. SSB 5252: Beginning September 1, 2024, school board members, superintendents, and any other staff at school districts that are required to perform tribal consultation under Title VI of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (P.L. 114-95, 20 U.S.C. Sec. 1001 et seq., 35 20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.) must take and certify completion of the tribal consultation training created under this section.

We are highlighting an example of relationship building toward co-management and power sharing between the Nez Perce Tribe, the Clarkston School District, and Washington State University. The Nez Perce Tribe has treaty reserved rights in Washington State, outlined in the “Out of State Accord” signed in 2004.

Nez Perce Tribe and Clarkston School District STEP Partnership

In 2024, the Nez Perce Tribal Education Agency (TEA) established a formal agreement with Clarkston School District and the WA Office of Native Education (ONE) to support Tribal self-determination and improve academic outcomes for Native students. This effort, part of the federally funded State Tribal Education Partnership (STEP) grant, includes partnerships with the Coeur d’Alene and Shoshone-Bannock TEAs, six Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and State Education Agencies (SEAs) in Idaho and Washington. A key STEP goal is building LEA and SEA capacity to integrate Tribal history, language, and culture.

In April, 2025, the Nez Perce TEA partnered with Washington State University’s (WSU) Office of Tribal Relations and Native American Programs to host a John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial (JMLSTI) training in Pullman. Seven educators—six from Clarkston and one from Kamiah—participated.

Francene Watkins and Angel Sobotta (WSU College of Education, College of Education, Sport, and Human Sciences, and Cultural Studies and Social Thought in Education) are collaborating with the Nez Perce TEA to develop culturally grounded curriculum on Nez Perce history, language, and culture for K–12 students. This effort supports Washington’s mandate requiring LEAs within 50 miles of a Tribal Nation to implement the JMLSTI curriculum. Clarkston and six nearby LEAs fall within this zone. The new materials will supplement JMLSTI with a focus on Nez Perce stories and language for both Native and non-Native learners.

Listening Session Summary:
Tribal Leaders, Educators, and Liaisons Make All the Difference

In our interviews with the most effective JMLSTI programs and implementations, the success always traced back to a passionate Native American or ally in roles such as Tribal liaison, coordinator, director, manager, or educator. These positions hold crucial space, bridging Tribal community knowledge with Western academic knowledge through history, experience, and expertise. Their passion often exceeds expectations, and we strongly encourage schools and administrators to value and respect these roles, as they carry heavy burdens and often have big hearts. For instance,

- The leadership of Sara Marie Ortiz with the Highline School District collaborating with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe to help guide her district's leadership with relationship-building and JMLSTI curriculum implementation.

- Mary Wilber and her leadership as the Chair of the Western Washington Native American Education Consortium and for her leadership and collaboration with the Snoqualmie Tribe and the Eastside Native American Education Program to implement the JMLSTI curriculum.

- Jennifer LeBret within the traditional territories of the Spokane Tribe of Indians, who contributed to the social-emotional or Indigenous science aspects of JMLSTI.

- Jerad Koepp, who collaborated with the Nisqually Tribe and schools to plan Tribal community events.

These Native leaders, and many like them, serve at various regional and state levels to advance Native American education so that schools may benefit from strong Tribal partnerships.

2005-2015

The passage of HB 1495 established the need for the development of a curriculum that would be meaningful and general enough to integrate into all classrooms across Washington state and allow for integration of tribal-specific history. To begin this work, Denny Sparr Hurtado and Joan Banker with the OSPI Office of Native Education convened a curriculum advisory committee. The advisory committee consisted of Tribal and non-Tribal leaders and educators. Three amazing individuals were selected to begin the process of developing the framework structures and Tribal sovereignty and history lessons which came to be the JMLSTI curriculum: Dr. Shana Brown, Dr. Elese Washines, and Jerry Price.

- Curriculum framework and unit structures include:
  - Three pedagogical approaches: Place-based, inquiry-based, multi-modal learning that can be integrated into existing instruction.
  - Curriculum presents Tribal people as contemporary, focusing on contemporary issues we share in common.
  - Essential Questions that guide the development of all lessons.
  - The Big 5 Outcomes for each grade level.
  - Units for Elementary, Middle School, and High School aligned with state's Social Studies units of study.
    - Grade 4 and Grade 7: Washington State History.
    - Grade 5, Grade 8, and Grade 11: U.S. History.
    - Grade 12: Contemporary World Problems.

- To facilitate integration with existing classroom practices, lessons were aligned with state learning standards for Social Studies, English Language Arts (ELA), and the OSPI-developed Social Studies and History classroom-based assessments. The JMLSTI curriculum has the distinction of being the first curriculum in the country to be aligned with ELA standards.

- Early on, Shana recommended that the curriculum be developed as an online resource. During this time, the curriculum passed through several platform transitions from Wiki, to Moodle, to Word Press. During the initial stages of the curriculum's history two access issues were in play. First, was the "gatekeeping" that many districts engaged in with technology policy and practices. This required additional steps with district technology leaders for classroom educators and students to have access to the online learning resources. A second issue involved access to reliable internet. During this time, Tribes and school districts were actively developing internet capacities.

- Between 2005-2009, several Native Student Youth Leadership conferences were hosted by ONE on college campuses in Eastern and Western Washington. Youth had opportunities to learn in culturally-grounded ways with Tribal education leaders and elders. As a culminating activity, youth developed and shared presentations focusing on contemporary issues that intersect with Tribal sovereignty, history and culture.

- The first curriculum units were piloted in 2008.

- The STI Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State final report to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was issued in 2012. This report outlined implementation successes, challenges, and risks, and included strategic lessons learned, and success stories.

    - Following is a snapshot of teacher responses to the question: Why is using STI curriculum important for you to use in your classroom?"

        - To develop, in Native students, a sense of who they are, and to demonstrate that a teacher cares enough to take the time to teach them about their "real" history.
        - Give students quality lesson plans that will benefit them in understanding Native American issues.
        - Familiarity of surrounding tribes and ending some of the "myths" about Native Americans.
        - Students will have a better understanding of Native American history.
        - Better understanding of complete local history.
        - Exposure, understanding, recognition.
        - Give my students an understanding of the Tribe in their area and be able to appreciate their contributions.
        - The most important outcome to me is that the students have a more balanced understanding of the role of the American Indian in the Northwest.
        - Providing students with a more complete/faceted look at history instead of merely teaching one perspective.
        - That students in my classroom understand that Indian people are still here - not artifacts. Also to recognize the rich history and cultural contributions of local and non-local tribes to our community, state, and nation.
        - I want my students to be open-minded to absorbing information about Native issues and understanding the concepts we're teaching.

- Maintenance of the curriculum is essential and requires on-going attention to ensure that links are working and content remains timely and meaningful.

WWU Youth Camp Group - Photo Credit: Denny Sparr Hurtado (Skokomish)

2015-2025

The passage of SB 5433 requiring the implementation of the JMLSTI curriculum spurred the growth of curriculum resources. Additionally, the passage of SB 5028 requiring JMLSTI be integrated into teacher preparation programs required these programs develop course curriculum specific their institutions in collaboration with the Tribe or Tribes nearest their locations.

- In 2015, the curriculum platform changed from Word Press to the OSPI server. One challenge was moving from a visually engaging platform to a more static platform.
- JMLSTI lesson and curriculum resources continued to be updated.
- New lesson resources and standard alignments were added to the JMLSTI curriculum including:

1. Early Learning: The early learning curriculum complements the “Since Time Immemorial” Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State Curriculum developed through ONE/OSPI. It is the culmination of a shared vision of the Tribal Nations, ONE/OSPI, First Peoples First Steps Alliance, Thrive Washington, the Department of Early Learning, and Puget Sound Educational Service District’s Native American Programs (Rebecca Kreth, former director of the PSESD Native American Early Learning Project).
2. At the request of primary elementary educators, the JMLSTI K-3 lessons were developed.
3. Native Knowledge 360° units developed by the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian were added to the JMLSTI curriculum.
4. Spanish language translation of key JMLSTI curriculum resources.
5. JMLSTI curriculum lessons aligned to state Environmental and Sustainability Education and Social Emotional Learning Standards.
6. The Medicine Creek Treaty of 1854 developed by the Nisqually Indian Tribe added to the JMLSTI curriculum.

- Many Tribes began and continue to engage in curriculum writing. A Tribal Curriculum Writers workgroup self-organized and convened to discuss implementation issues and share ideas. This group consisted of individuals who had been designated by their Tribe to help support the JMLSTI curriculum.

- The University of Washington's Native Education Certification Program was developed in 2017. The JMLSTI curriculum was and is foundational to the 2-year course.

- In 2018, legislation was passed requiring a 0.5 stand-alone course for each high school student, that offer students an opportunity to learn federal, state, tribal, and local government organization and procedures.
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures, several strategies were implemented to support students and educators:

1. Additional sections were added to the curriculum website including "Ready to Go" lessons, "Teacher & Librarian Implementation Videos," Northwest Native American Reading Curriculum, and Native American Stories and Science Connections.
2. Implementation of existing JMLSTI curriculum resources was written into state planning guidance documents for districts. Because lessons were being taught online at students' homes, this was also a first for families to learn Tribal sovereignty and history, and culture with their children.
3. Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) grants were made available to Tribes to develop JMLSTI tribally-specific resources for educators and students.

- On-going collaborations to develop tribal-specific curriculums, resources, and scope and sequence. For instance, the Tulalip Tribes addressed the challenge of the Tulalip Tribes addressed the challenge of supporting multiple districts by developing a regional approach. Connection with place and long-held teachings and understanding of the Tribes' usual and accustomed lifeways sparked the idea of a regional approach. Staff dedicated by the Tulalip Tribes to oversee and support this work began cultivating relationships and investing time with key touch-point leaders. Because continuity is so important and recognizing the high mobility rates of educators and administrators occurring in schools, Tribal staff looked for individuals who are regionally-rooted. The regional collaboration began with four "early adopter" districts and continued to grow from there.

We have included several examples of initiatives and varying approaches that have been developed in support of local, regional, and higher education focused on the collaborative development of tribal-specific sovereignty, history, and culture curriculums emerging from and in support of the JMLSTI curriculum implementation.

Spokane Tribal Lifeways Curriculum Project
shared by Jennifer LeBret, Spokane Tribe of Indians

In 2014, the Wellpinit School District (WSD) applied for and received an Indian Education Demonstration Grant. The school district resides within the boundaries of the Spokane Indian Reservation. That fall, the WSD hired Apolonio Hernandez as their grant director. Mr. Hernandez spent a few months working on building relationships with Tribal community members, meeting with elders and the elder committee, and the Spokane Tribe Business Council. Next came conversations with the Tribes preservation department, language and culture department, and the Tribe's department of Natural Resources. After getting recommendations from multiple individuals and reporting to WSD leadership the Spokane Tribal Lifeways curriculum development team was formed. The team was comprised of Tribal members, Tribal elders, Tribal employees, Tribal teachers, non-Native teachers, school administrators, and a school board member. In order for the curriculum to be both aligned with state history standards and have important untold history of the Spokane people, there needed to be multiple perspectives.

It was important to plan meetings that lasted a few hours and not to rush the process. Group norms were established to create a space for everyone to be heard and for orderly documentation. Story telling is an important aspect of Native communication and the gathering of information for curriculum was no exception.

We suspected that the students would be more engaged and excited to learn history through the curriculum we were developing, but it wasn't until the team began piloting the lessons in classrooms that our suspicions were confirmed. Students were asking for more.

It is important to mention that the creation of this curriculum does not come without triggering traumas within Native people. In the recollection of historical events, there are feelings that arise that need to be honored and respected. The cultural genocide that took place, and is still taking place, didn't happen all that long ago. Spokane Tribal Lifeways Curriculum: https://spokanetlc.com/

Mt. Adams School District and Yakama Nation:
A Model for JML Since Time Immemorial Curriculum Implementation
written by Dr. Elese Washines, Yakama Nation Higher Education Director

Mt. Adams School District (MASD), in formal partnership with the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Yakama Nation), offers an exemplary model for the implementation of the JML Since Time Immemorial (STI) Tribal Sovereignty Curriculum. The district has intentionally integrated Yakama history, culture, language, and governance into elementary education through locally designed curriculum materials, elder engagement, and intergenerational language learning. This collaboration reflects a long-term commitment to tribal sovereignty in education and the goals outlined in the original 2008 report *From Where the Sun Rises*. represents meaningful consultation, and the vision provided through the Yakama Nation 10-year Strategic Education Plan passed by Tribal Resolution T-32-18 and ratified by General Council Members GCM-09-2018.

Key Features of Implementation

1. Co-Development of Curriculum
MASD collaborated with Yakama educators, artists, linguists, and University of Oregon Ichishkiin students to develop curricular units rooted in Yakama oral tradition. The curriculum design emphasizes:

- Yakama stories and teachings (e.g., Sɨ́kni legend)
- Ichishkiin language learning with leveled progressions
- Inclusion of the Educational Yakama Virtues (Wilkins, 2008)
- Place-based learning centered on Mt. Adams and tribal homelands

2. Language Integration and Differentiation
Each legend lesson includes three levels of Ichishkiin engagement:

- Level 1: Root nouns and flashcards with pronunciation audio
- Level 2: Simple sentences and interactive vocabulary exercises
- Level 3: Full Ichishkiin retelling, led by advanced speakers. Teachers receive structured support including videos, pronunciation guides, and culturally responsive instructional practices.

3.Highlight: Dr. Virginia Beavert's Contribution
At over 100 years old, revered Yakama elder Dr. Virginia Beavert provided the full Ichishkiin translation of the Sɨ́kni (Yellowbell) legend. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Beavert joined all 4th-grade classrooms via Zoom, offering a rare intergenerational experience where ten-year-old students learned directly from a centenarian elder. Her participation reinforced Yakama values and ensured fidelity to linguistic and cultural protocols.

4. Cultural Teachings through Legends
The Sɨ́kni legend tells of a flower that oversleeps and turns away from the sun—teaching humility, responsibility, and connection to seasonal cycles. Students learn scientific concepts like wind and plant adaptation through cultural narrative while practicing Ichishkiin vocabulary and reflecting on personal behaviors.

5. Educational Virtues and School Culture
MASD integrates the Yakama Educational Virtues, which are visibly displayed and embedded in daily classroom practices. These virtues—such as Respect, Humility, and Generosity—shape behavior expectations, learning reflections, and community-building activities across the school.

Community Sharing
Presentations to Yakama Education Committee, Tribal Council, and families

High-Level Implementation Workflow

Phase	Activity
Co-Design	Weekly meetings with tribal leaders, educators, and language speakers
Curriculum Development	Creation of legend-based lessons, teacher toolkits, and vocabulary supports
Implementation in Classrooms	Teachers co-teach with cultural staff; scaffolded lessons K–5
Student Engagement	Retellings, drawings, puppet shows, and oral language performance
Assessment & Reflection	Formative and summative checks, aligned with STI benchmarks and Yakama values

Outcomes and Impact

- Mt Adams School District was able to increase student engagement from 100 students annually to ALL elementary students engaged in Ichishkiin and Yakama studies annually
- Students demonstrate retention through storytelling, vocabulary usage, and respectful behavior aligned to Yakama virtues
- Model lesson featured in OSPI JMLSTI “Teacher to Teacher” webinars
- Supports onboarding of new staff with local tribal knowledge and curriculum guides

Conclusion

Mt. Adams School District’s partnership with the Yakama Nation demonstrates how JMLSTI can be transformed from a compliance requirement into a living, community-embedded practice. Their culturally grounded model bridges generations, centers tribal sovereignty, and advances the educational achievement and identity of Native students. This partnership—and the lifelong contributions of elders such as Dr. Virginia Beavert—embody the spirit of *From Where the Sun Rises* and signal a pathway for schools across Washington State.

Listening Session Summary:
Deepen JMLSTI Preservice Education in Higher Education

Educational institutions often meet only the basic requirements, focusing on fulfilling multiple demands rather than sometimes investing in transformative education. UW Tacoma exemplifies this by creating a 5-credit course to prepare teachers in JMLSTI education, exceeding the 1-credit requirement. WSU collaborates with the Nez Perce Tribe to develop meaningful JMLSTI professional training experiences for the Clarkston and Pullman School Districts. Although other examples exist, this report calls on higher education to engage with Tribes and the OSPI Office of Native Education to enhance their teacher education programs. Teachers should be equipped with the rich cultural history of Northwest Tribes and learn to use the JMLSTI curriculum as a foundation for deeper learning and skills to go beyond the website curriculum.

University of Washington – Bothel - Teacher Preparation Program shared by Dr. Sarah B. Shears, Associate Professor, Social Studies and Multicultural Education

The University of Washington Bothell School of Educational Studies (SES) requires all teacher certification students to complete a 5-credit standalone course in teaching and learning to support tribal sovereignty. Students enrolled in the course, which is currently offered in both Winter and Spring quarters, engage in a number of learning modules on a range of topics, including but not limited to: foundations of settler colonialism, treaties between Native nations and the United States, historical and contemporary efforts for federal recognition, experiences of Native American children in U.S. schools and child welfare systems (including ICWA), Native social justice pedagogy, and efforts to center Native peoples and Nations in K-12 curriculum in Washington State and other states. Each learning module invites students to watch and discuss a variety of short films and TedTalks featuring Native educators, scholars, and activists. In addition, the learning modules include scholarly and teacher-focused articles, as well as Dr. Leilani Sabzalian's (Alutiiq) book, Indigenous Children's Survivance in Public Schools. There is also a learning module that centers entirely on Native documentary films as a means to engage both content and pedagogy (e.g., critical media literacy) on a wide array of issues including, but not limited to boarding school histories, environmental justice, food sovereignty, treaty rights, and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. As a course that works to support students' content and pedagogical learning, a significant amount of time is spent reviewing the John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial curriculum (JMLSTI), along with additional teaching materials offered by such organizations as the National Museum of the American Indian (Native Knowledge 360). Students use JMLSTI as a foundation to consider how all learning is interdisciplinary and rooted in place. They also work together, and when possible with guest speakers, to better understand the responsibility of teaching from an anticolonial frame and how that can take shape in K-12 classrooms. As Victoria Vancour, a 2025 graduate of the SES elementary teacher certification program, reflected,

[M]y experience in Tribal Sovereignty and with Dr. Sabzalian's work has been transformative. It has helped me see education not just as a neutral practice, but as a powerful tool that can either uphold systems of oppression or become a means of healing and resistance. I choose the latter. I will carry forward the lessons I've learned in this course as a compass, guiding my efforts to create classrooms that honor Indigenous knowledge, promote equity, and encourage all students to become critical thinkers and compassionate learners. Through continued reflection, community collaboration, and commitment to change, I hope to contribute to a future where education is truly inclusive and just.

While the course is required for all SES teacher certification students, there are seats available for students in other majors. In previous years, students from such programs as computer science, environmental science, biology, pre-law, marketing, and engineering have taken the class. In cases where non-teaching certification students take the course, assignments are modified to invite students to consider the ways recognizing and upholding tribal sovereignty are important for their lives and future professions. These students also consider why it is important to support teachers to center JMLSTI in their classroom practice.

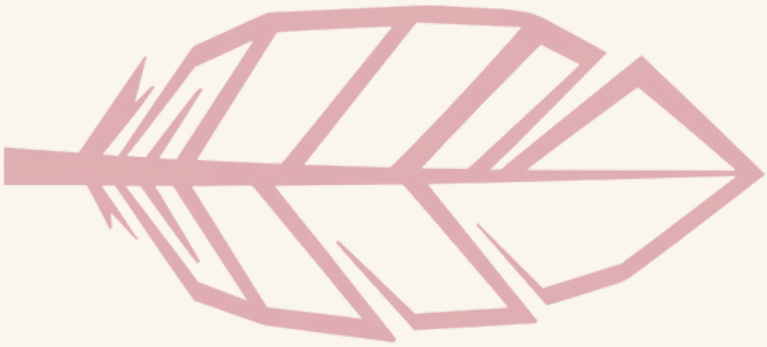
3. Professional learning in collaboration with Tribal partners for educators and policy makers.

Early in its inception, Tribal partners and curriculum leaders recognized the essential role of professional development to educate educators, to raise educator's knowledge of tribal history and culture specifically focusing on the Tribe nearest their school, to understand the pedagogical approaches of the curriculum, to unpack curriculum resources, and to seek a commitment from educators to continue their professional growth with Tribal partners and other educators.

2005–2015

- ONE presented at several Indian Education association gatherings and conferences. Tribes and Native education groups were the initial "early adopters" supportive of the JMLSTI curriculum. Curriculum sessions were featured at annual conferences sharing the curriculum resources and where updates were provided to members and boards with the request of feedback on how to strengthen the curriculum and its implementation.

- Professional development is essential to implementing the JMLSTI curriculum with fidelity. How do we develop capacity to reach all educators across the state and region? To meet this need, ONE developed and provided Trainings and Training of Trainers sessions for leaders and educators across the state. Training materials were added to the curriculum website to ensure ongoing accessibility. Trainings focused on raising awareness of the legislative opportunity to implement tribal sovereignty, history, and culture lessons into all classrooms across the state, strengthening educators' knowledge of tribal history, unpacking curriculum resources, sharing examples of "how" to integrate and implement JMLSTI lessons into existing curriculum, and supporting relationship-building with Tribal partners. During this phase, trainings focused on reaching classroom educators.



Shana Brown Leading Professional Development - Photo credit: Denny Sparr Hurtado (Skokomish)

2015–2025

- To close the gap between in-service and pre-service educators, Senate Bill 5028 passed in 2017 requiring JMLSTI curriculum be integrated into teacher preparation programs. The legislation strengthened collaborations between Tribal partners, ONE, the Professional Educators Standards Board, and colleges and universities with teacher preparation programs. Although the legislation focused on classroom educators, many administrative programs reached out to ONE in an effort to collaborate to develop and implement content to support school administration candidates.

- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures, JMLSTI curriculum trainings and webinars pivoted and were hosted online. A webinar format was necessary to facilitate the hundreds of educators requesting opportunity to participate.

We offer as example, the intentional efforts of the Seattle Public Schools, the largest school district in the state, in collaboration with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and the Suquamish Tribe, to implement the JMLSTI districtwide. Their report emphasizes professional development and provides feedback shared by educators and principals. We also highlight the collaborations between the Nisqually Tribe and the North Thurston Public Schools that have created a STI implementation committee. Finally, we highlight the work of Tribes in Eastern and Western Washington that are now hosting Effective Teaching Institutes in their regions. The Muckleshoot Tribal College will be hosting their 5th annual Effective Teaching Institute this summer.

Seattle Public Schools Tribal History and Culture Extended Core Instructional Materials Board Action Report Updated (2024)
Developed by Gail Morris, Shana Brown, Brown, and Zachary LeClair

On June 26, 2019, Seattle Public Schools (SPS) unanimously adopted Tribal History and Culture Extended Core Instructional Materials, including state-mandated JMLSTI curriculum for all K – 12 SPS classrooms. The district dedicated $300,000 toward a 3-year plan of implementation, and continued funding for one additional year due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. SPS collaborates with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and the Suquamish Tribe to implement the JMLSTI curriculum. The report highlighted four components of progress including curriculum, professional development, infrastructure, and future work. Progress updates included:

- Provided ongoing professional development
- Created and curated curricula & resources
- Created yearlong 7th grade WA History scope and sequence and units of study
- Increased collaboration with ELA/Social Studies
- Fully integrated with K-5 Social Studies overview documents
- Reduced instances of stereotype threats to Native students
- Expanded the American Indian Resource Library
- Provided a JMLSTI course (EDTEP) for the Seattle Teacher Residency

Staff survey highlights: K-8 Teachers:

Awareness of implementation: A majority of K-8 eligible general education and specialist certificated teacher respondents indicated awareness of Tribal History and Culture Extended Core Instructional Materials, with fewer than 15% of all respondents indicating no awareness. While staff are generally aware of the requirement, they for some reason do not prioritize compliance.

Educators trained: In spring 2023 (one year after training had been completed for teachers), eligible educators who indicated whether they'd been trained on the relevant curriculum in the last three years responded with lower levels of agreement than records of professional development show. 1 in 2 eligible educators respondents selected "Unsure" or "N/A (not my content area)." There is either a lack of clarity among educators about what constitutes district STI training or little sense of urgency to comply with the curriculum adoption.

Degree of implementation: K-5 general education teacher survey respondents indicated the most consistent implementation of STI curriculum, with 60% indicating teaching at least a few lessons. Specialist respondents were more likely to identify teaching STI as not their content area, no matter their specialization. Elementary teachers seem to be either more aware of the adoption or more attuned to the need for decolonizing curriculum.

Staff survey highlights: K-12 Principals

Degree of Awareness: Most school leader respondents indicated they were aware of SPS's adoption of Tribal History and Culture Extended Core Instructional Materials. Given higher awareness and lower compliance, school leaders are possibly not prioritizing the adoption or are regarding the adoption as somehow optional.

Training Coverage: Few school leader respondents indicated taking the district's required training over the last three years. Multiple high school principals indicated N/A, or they did not understand AIS/STI training as their content areas. One possible explanation for the lack of implementation (despite knowledge of the adoption itself) is a lack of district promotion of the adoption and state legislation surrounding Since Time Immemorial.

Degree of Implementation: Elementary and K-8 school leader respondents indicated the highest rates of STI implementation, with about 3 in 4 middle and high school leader respondents indicating they were unsure of their degree of implementation. Principals were most likely to have observed teachers implementing STI and informing teachers of STI. Assistant principal respondents were more likely to indicate they were unsure (~50%) compared to principals (~25%). It is unclear whether principals are referring to a pre- implementation period when it comes to such uncertainties, but either way responses indicate a communication gap in implementation. The Native Education department has been requesting time with principals since 2019 to more clearly outline these responsibilities and hopes to have more opportunities to meet with them in the upcoming school years.

The report conclusion summarizes,

- The remedy begins with a shared vision between the Native American Education Program and SPS to develop “a shared depth of understanding about the purpose and nature of the work…in the minds and actions, individually and especially collectively.” (Safir & Dugan, Street Data, p. 123). Any cohesive understanding, Safir and Dugan maintain, requires a shared vision. So, what is our shared vision, and how do we shift priorities toward full implementation?

Offering the questions:

- What is the district’s financial obligation to Since Time Immemorial?
- How does the district accommodate the unique nature of Since Time Immemorial and prioritize perennial training, development, and visibility? (over 10% of trained staff have left since 2022)
- What are the district’s common and equitable expectations for curriculum adoptions in general?
- What is the district's perception of adequate adoption (e.g., how will we know it's good enough)?

Nisqually Tribe and North Thurston Public Schools STI Committee interview shared with Jerad Koepp, NTPS Native Education Program Specialist, 2022 Washington State Educator of the Year

Key to the Nisqually Tribe and North Thurston Public Schools (NTPS) collaborations for JMLSTI implementation was the creation of the Since Time Immemorial (STI) committee in 2016 as a way tobuild a really strong foundation that's sustainable, reciprocal, can continue to expand over time, and can weather and grow through changing relationships and different administrations on the district and Tribal partner's side. The committee consists of Tribal representatives, the NTPS Native Education Program Specialist, and lead educators and school and district administrators. The STI committee began meeting on a quarterly basis, and now meets monthly. Meeting locations rotate between Nisqually Tribe and NTPS sites. The STI committee shares updates at the government-to-government consultation meetings between the Nisqually Tribe's Tribal Council and the NPTS School Board. The intent of the STI committee was to normalize the curriculum implementation as part of who we are as a community. People remember the most how they feel when they do; feeling encouraged, embraced, and supported.

Early on, it became clear that there needed to be a shared event. Bill Kallappa, who was Nisqually Tribe's interim education director at the time, suggested a "Billy Frank, Jr. Day." Billy Frank, Jr. is a local legend and was a huge figure of civil rights and treaty rights, and Nisqually Tribe member. Common things heard from non-Native educators implementing tribal curriculum is, "I'm afraid I'm going to make a mistake." "I don't know who to talk to." "How do you bring a Native person into my class to speak." "I've not engaged with this culture." "Where do I start?" "How do I build confidence and background knowledge to make me feel like I can thrive in the classroom when I teach this great material?" The STI committee felt this would be a great time for the district to showcase its work in STI implementation and bring educator and Native people together in a community-centric way.

The Billy Frank, Jr. event features tables set up by each school across the district showcasing student STI work and learning. It's like a STI science fair. Students show off their teachers and teachers meet Native students' families. From these connections students say, "Can my auntie come in and talk to class or do a demonstration?" Or "My family's on the Canoe family. Can we do an assembly?" The Tribe choses how it wishes to participate. From here, doors of possibility open. The Nisqually Tribe and NTPS have just celebrated the 6th Annual Billy Frank, Jr. Day celebration.

Other impacts resulting from the collaborations between the Nisqually Tribe and NTPS:

- 4th Grade Washington State History hands-on, interactive and place-based cultural and field-trip learning activities
- 7th Grade Washington State full year course
- 11th Grade U.S. History, Literature course through Native perspectives
- A comprehensive K-12 JMLSTI district website for Educators, featuring scope and sequence and lesson resources.
- Nisqually Tribe flags gifted to NTPS to fly at each of the district's 22 schools.

Muckleshoot Tribal College Effective Teaching Institute

The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe's (MIT) Tribal College is hosting its 5th Annual Effective Teaching Institute (ETI) in June 2025. ETI is a three-day conference that brings together educators, partners, and leaders to advance Indigenous-centered education. Sessions include student-centered pedagogy, JMLSTI training, cultural responsiveness, partnership discussions, field trips (Tomanamus Forest, MIT Fisheries, MIT Tribal Council Government Chambers, MIT Early Learning Center, MIT Tribal College Native film screenings, etc.) and more. Native- authored books are featured and every participant comes away with a new book and an updated booklist of books written by Native authors. Workshops offer tools and hands-on activities to support and build upon the incredible work already being done with Indigenous students across the region. The Effective Teaching Institute is open to educators, administrators, Tribal leaders, support staff, community partners, and anyone working in or alongside Indigenous education. During the first year of ETI, nearly 100 educators attended. In 2025, over 300 educators are expecting to attend.

Dr. Denise Bill, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe's Executive Director of Adult and Higher Education, explains, "Early learning to adult educators attend the conference. It is important for educators to establish relationships with Native people. This is a place where educators meet Native people and learn how to support Native students in schools and across communities, and learn our traditional values and teachings to be kind, helpful, and to share. ETI is a positive model for this learning." Dr. Bill adds, that we all know that "What's best for Native students, is best for all students."

Justine Koble, MIT's Continuing Education Instructional Coordinator, shared that "Many of the presenters become resources to educators. The more educators can ask questions, the more they will try to implement JMLSTI." She adds, "When we do our work well together, it grows like a beautiful snowball."

Resource: Muckleshoot Tribal College Journal available on Muckleshoot Tribal College website at www.mtcollege.org

4. System capacity building for sustainable growth.

2005–2015

- The JMLSTI curriculum project was an unfunded project. Early on, Denny Hurtado reached out to Tribes and other private funders to raise monies to compensate curriculum writers and support the development of the professional learning. OSPI provided ONE with an initial $20,000 to begin development. The largest funder of this project was the Tribes.
- In addition to their other office responsibilities, Denny and Joan provided oversight and administrative support to grow the JMLSTI project.
- District's begin to engage in consultation with Tribes to develop Memorandums of Agreement and Memorandums of Understanding in support the JMLSTI curriculum.
- District school boards begin to develop policy specific to implementation of the JMLSTI curriculum.
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- District school boards begin to develop policy specific to implementation of the JMLSTI curriculum.

2015-2025

- With the passage of SB 5028, modest funds were provided to teacher preparation programs to begin planning and development of their courses.
- In 2018, the legislature provided funding to ONE to staff the office to support the curriculum implementation and relationship-building.
- Districts continue to engage in consultation with Tribes to develop Memorandums of Agreement and Memorandums of Understanding in support the JMLSTI curriculum.
- District school boards continue to develop policy specific to implementation of the JMLSTI curriculum.
- In 2024, the legislature passed HB 1879 passed naming the curriculum in honor of John McCoy (lulilaš).

Listening Session Summary:
Implementation Accountability, Consistency, Resources

The JMLST has been invaluable legislation, producing tremendous education, collaborations, and learning opportunities across our state. However, the legislation has been in place for 20 years and, according to Native leaders, educators, and representatives, it still lacks accountability, consistency, and the resources needed to implement the curriculum properly (e.g., website expansion, evaluation, and deadlines). This is a vital investment for Washington state, as it is part of our enriched United States history and Tribal people remain active leaders, investors, and contributors to our state.

2005–2015

- Reports provided by ONE to the Centennial Accord and State Legislature.
- STI Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State: Final Report to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2012).

2015-2025

- Reports provided by ONE to the Centennial Accord and State Legislature.
- Criteria to monitor implementation of the JMLSTI curriculum added as Section 19.B to OSPI federal Comprehensive Programs Review (CPR) for districts required to consult with Tribes per the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Criteria includes evidence of consultation and JMLSTI implementation.

Like the steady beat of the drum, every year at the annual Centennial Accord meeting, the highest level of government-to-government relations between sovereign Tribes across our region and the Governor, Tribal Leaders consistently call for the full implementation of the tribal sovereignty and history curriculum in all schools with all students with consistency and fidelity. This persistent “call to action” is a reminder that we have fallen short and that there is more work to do with urgency.

What more is there for us to do, with urgency, to fully implement the JMLSTI curriculum?

Listening Session Summary:
Continued Investment in Expanding JMLSTI Curriculum is Critical

There has been incredible progress in developing the JMLSTI curriculum and supportive training. However, the materials are just the foundation, and beyond what was discussed earlier, there is a need to expand the JMLSTI curriculum. Schools that regularly implement it have reviewed the curriculum and request that it be expanded in a user-friendly manner on websites, with updated links, and made more specific to grade development. Some teachers may use the same material across various grade levels. Region-specific Tribal materials are also critical. For some smaller Tribes, it's difficult to keep up with the demands of schools to provide education and contributions or reviews to the curriculum. In addition to other partners, higher education can also support Tribes in developing school curriculum.

Moving forward, we offer the following specific recommendations suggested through our listening sessions and interviews.

Recommendations for the Office of Native Education (ONE):

- Update, revise, and maintain the JMLSTI curriculum resource, in collaboration with Tribal partners, to reflect current issues impacting Tribes and all citizens. Continue to /make this an "Educator and Tribe Friendly" resource that is regional-specific, visually engaging, and has the capacity to integrate videos and other multimedia shared by Tribes.
- Update, revise, and implement JMSTI professional development and training sessions in collaboration with Tribal partners.
- Develop a quarterly newsletter highlighting promising practices. Send to Tribes, internal OSPI staff and departments, district partners, teacher and administrator organizations, Tribes, and Tribal education organizations.
- Update or add a component to the JMLSTI curriculum requirement and promising practices to the School Directors' government-to-government training and Principal government-to-government recertification training.

EOGOAC monitor and report on the inclusion of JMLSTI best practices implementation for statewide cultural competence training (4SHB 1541) for school directors, superintendents, principals, administrators, and teachers.

Align JMLSTI curriculum implementation with teacher and administrator evaluations.

Develop a systemic rubric and reporting system for school districts and teacher preparation programs based on a phased-in approach to implementation and include:

- Relationship-building.
- District-wide implementation plan.
- Professional learning for educators, administrators (school and district), school and university staff.
- Implementation reports.

Continued policy development:

- Require JMLSTI professional learning as part of teacher and administrator certification and re-certification.
- Standardize the credit level for stand-alone JMLSTI higher education teacher preparation programs.
- Establish a timeline requiring districts and teacher preparation programs to implement JMLSTI curriculum.

Investment to support:

- Tribes in developing curriculum in collaboration with district partners.
- Tribes in developing and implementing local and regional professional learning.
- Districts with curriculum development and professional learning.
- ONE's revisions, updates, communication, and system reporting development and implementation.
- Higher education convenings, in collaboration with Tribal and district partners, to share promising practices in relationship-building and implementing JMLSTI curriculum with courses.

Resources

John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State website

- Washington Districts/Nearest Tribe

Since Time Immemorial: Developing Tribal Sovereignty Curriculum for Washington's Schools (2010). The Evergreen State College: Native Case Study

STI Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State: Final Report to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. (2012).

Since Time Immemorial: An Appreciative Inquiry of Washington State's Curriculum for Indigenous Studies authored by Juanita Holtyn, EdD, Leadership for Change (2018).

Grandmother Cedar as Sovereignty Teacher: Transformations in Teacher Learning, Research-Practice Partnerships, and Curriculum authored by Jennifer Conrad (2020).

The Forest for the Trees – Deforestation and Dieback of Implementation of Legislated Tribal History and Sovereignty Curriculum in an Urban School District authored by Shana Brown (2025).

Legislation in Action:
State-Tribal Education Compact Schools

Since the publication of the 2008 *From Where the Sun Rises* report, the State-Tribal Education Compact (STEC) legislation and resulting compacts highlights a significant shift of the government-to-government relationships between the Tribes and Washington State.

We extend our gratitude to Tribal leaders, Tribal education leaders, STEC administrators and administrative staff who participated in the STEC interviews and listening sessions to share your insights and perspectives about the ongoing and future work to sustain and grow tribally-controlled schools across our lands. Our gratitude to Henry Strom, OSPI Assistant Superintendent, and Kathrine Lawrence, Office of Native Education Administrative Program Specialist, for your support organizing the STEC listening sessions and sharing information to create our STEC table graphic for this report.

Since time immemorial, for thousands of years, Tribes have nurtured their youth passing on the teachings of the People from one generation to the next generation. Each child is valued and born into the legacy of community. Children and youth learned with the love, support, direction, and encouragement of elders and the entire community. The Creator-bestowed gifts and talents of each child were recognized, nurtured, and cultivated to contribute to the well-being of the community and their families through the practices and traditions of each Tribe's life ways. This learning included affirmation of their relationship, place, and responsibilities to other relations (their People, other Peoples, Nature, Ancestors) of this world. And in this way, each child was seen and known with a sense of purpose and connection. The disruption to this way of knowing, learning, and being was dramatically and traumatically experienced by Tribal people as a result of settler-colonial policies and practices. These disruptions, including the "Kill the Indian, Save the Man" approach of boarding schools, and the resulting consequences have been and continue to be documented, not to blame or shame, but to open space for a more comprehensive root-cause understanding including the intergenerational effects Tribal peoples experience today.

Here in our region, Native students attended public schools whose principal design was one of assimilation, grounded in a western-centric "one-size-fits-all" approach to education that excluded teaching of tribal languages, cultures, and histories. One of the resulting effects experienced by Native youth, families, and communities to this approach is "push-out" commonly referred to as drop-out. Again, the experiences of Native children and families in our public schools is well documented as early as the 1928 Meriam Report.

"I have seen students that were in the public school system, where they felt like they didn't belong. They were being pushed out. They enrolled in Chief Kitsap Academy. We have a couple of graduates this year, and to see them flourishing and going off to college is amazing. I think what Chief Kitsap Academy has done for them has been phenomenal." --Toni Jones, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe

In the 1960s and 1970s as Tribes exercised tribal sovereignty and treaty rights during the Fishing Rights struggle and subsequent Boldt decision ruling, Native students experienced severe backlash of racism and stereotype in schools connected with this work. This backlash came in the form of racist and threatening comments from staff, other students, and non-Tribal community members. It was during this time that Tribes across our region responded to the external threats our Native children were experiencing by establishing tribally-controlled and governed schools. The establishment of tribally-controlled schools is also a recommitment and assertion of tribal sovereignty and self-determination within education spaces to provide for the educational needs of the children, youth, and community more aligned with the values, teachings, and traditions of our ancestors.

Tribally-controlled schools were established with support of tribal resources and the federal Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) or, as is the case with Chief Kitsap Academy, solely with tribal resources. In order for tribal schools to receive state funding, each Tribe entered into interlocal agreements with school districts nearest them. As part of these agreements, districts received indirect monies to administrate and distribute state funds. Further, tribally-controlled schools did not receive the opportunity to write for additional state-grant funding. In response, the late Senator John McCoy, then Representative McCoy, collaborated with tribal leaders, tribal school leaders and other legislators to draft legislation to address the concerns relating to continued exercise of tribal sovereignty within education, the responsibility of relationship outlined in the 1989 government-to-government Centennial Accord between the federally recognized Tribes and the state, and ensure state funding would be received directly by tribal schools; and in the case of Chief Kitsap Academy since it not a BIE school, eligible federal funds. House Bill 1134 was passed by the state legislature in 2013 authorizing State-Tribal Education Compact schools (STECs).

In 2014, three Tribes—Lummi Nation, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, and the Suquamish Tribe—expressed their interest and intent to enter into compacts with OSPI and the Office of Native Education (ONE). Following legislative directives, OSPI and ONE began supporting the Tribes in developing the STEC application. Joan Banker, ONE's Administrative Program Specialist, took on most of this responsibility, including scheduling meetings between Tribes and various agency offices and departments such as finance, transportation, special education, teaching and learning, and the Office of Civil Rights. Each Tribe's compact agreement received final approval after review by both Tribal attorneys and OSPI's legal department and was signed by the respective Tribal chairman and the state superintendent.

Over the past 12 years since the initial STEC legislation, eight compacts have been developed, and several Tribes are in contact with ONE to learn more about the compacting process. As an initial STEC school, Muckleshoot Tribal School leaders Joseph Martin and Kay Turner have consistently provided support to Tribes interested in learning about the compact process by hosting visits and engaging in discussions. Once in compact, new STEC partners have sought and received additional support from them regarding the nuances of reporting structure at the school level. Support has always been generously offered in the spirit of collaboration. The following graphic table highlights the current STEC schools, including when the tribal school was established, the type of school, when the compact was established and renewed, and the grade levels currently served by the school.

School Name	Originally Founded	Governed By	Type of Tribal School	Grade Levels	STEC Since	Renewal Term	Renewal Due
Chief Kitsap Academy	2014	Suquamish Tribe	Tribally Controlled	6-12	2014	3 year	2026
Chief Leschi Schools	1976	Puyallup Tribe of Indians	BIE Tribally Controlled	PK-12	2018	5 year	2026
Lummi Nation Schools	1981	Lummi Nation	BIE Tribally Controlled	K-12	2014	Until Termination	
Muckleshoot Tribal Schools	1985	Muckleshoot Indian Tribe	BIE Tribally Controlled	K-12	2014	5 year	2027
Paschal Sherman Indian School	1974	Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	BIE Tribally Controlled	K-9	2023	3 year	2026
Quileute Tribal School	1979	Quileute Tribe	BIE Tribally Controlled	K-12	2016	5 year	2028
Wa He Lut Indian School	1974	Frank's Landing Indian Community	BIE Contract	K-8	2017	5 year	2027
Yakama Nation Tribal Jr/Sr High School	1980	Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation	BIE Tribally Controlled	8-12	2018	5 year	2029

In 2018, two important initiatives moved forward to strengthen learning opportunities for Native students attending STEC schools. First was the passage of Senate Bill 6474, establishing a pilot project for STEC schools to explore and implement options with respect to school attendance and calendar requirements for the purposes of accommodating cultural, fisheries, and agricultural events and practices; and replacing to the maximum extent permitted by state and federal law, statewide student assessment with locally developed assessments that are culturally relevant, based on community standards and aligned with the Washington state learning standards. The legislation further stipulated that, if requested by the STEC, OSPI was directed to convene a government-to-government meeting for the purpose of revising the compact to reflect the terms of the pilot project. OSPI was also authorized to convene a government-to-government meeting on his or her own.

Because locally developed assessments that aligned with Washington state's learning standards had not yet been developed, participating pilot STECs focused on school attendance and calendar requirements for the purposes of accommodating cultural, fisheries, and agricultural events and practices. No government-to-government convenings were called to reflect the terms of the pilot. Also in 2018, growing concern reached a high level of alarm from STEC leaders about the burden and instructional disruption that state-mandated and federal-mandated assessments was placing on BIE STEC schools and students. That fall, a meeting was hosted by the Lummi Nation, convening Tribal leaders of BIE STEC schools, STEC school leaders, federal BIE representatives, the OSPI Office of Native Education, and OSPI staff. The issue was resolved with the mutual understanding that BIE STEC schools would select one assessment system for their students to participate with.

The work in 2018 illustrates the ongoing and yet to be resolved issue of educational sovereignty regarding the opportunity for Tribes to develop and administer locally-developed assessments that are culturally relevant based on community standards, and aligned with state learning standards.
Our listening sessions centered around several areas of inquiry including benefits of being in compact, involvement of students with school-governance, challenges STEC schools are experiencing, and recommendations for continued growth. Our STEC leaders shared that they are seeing record numbers of students graduating and moving forward across grade levels, and moving from high school to work, college, trade, and vocational education: a sure sign that something is going right.

CKA (Suquamish) Beach Seining - Photo Credit: Brenda Guerrero

Benefits of Being a Compact School

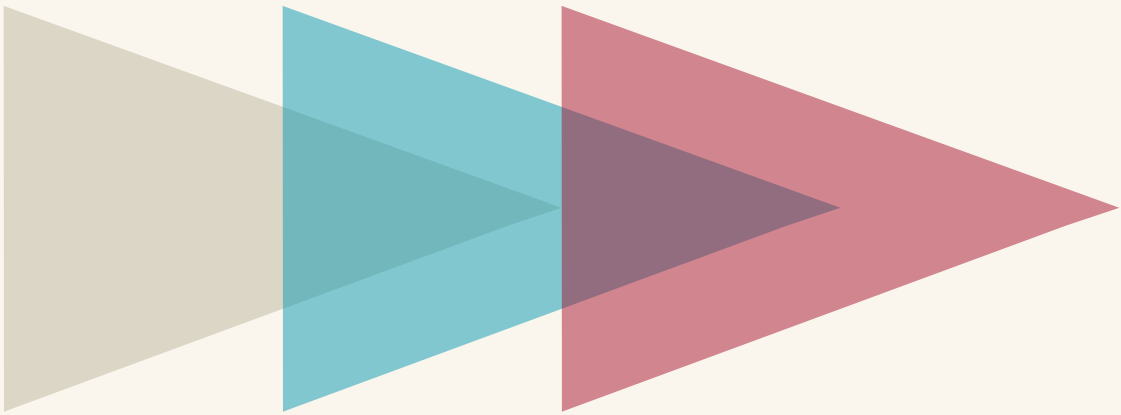
Listening session participant's comments addressed two areas of benefit - programs and educational opportunities as well as a third area of general ideas.

STEC school programs by design specific to meet the needs and interests of the students and families of each Tribal community. Programs:

- Center and address the cultural needs and interests of students and families.
- Provide smaller class sizes with individualized instruction for our students.
- Offer breakfast, lunch, and snacks at no cost to our students.
- Ensure transportation is available for all students living within defined transportation boundaries.
- Promote culturally relevant and rigorous academics.
- Provide a culturally safe, supportive, and positive learning environment.
- Engage families with parent committee meetings and family engagement nights.
- Offer opportunities for Tribal community and parent volunteers.
- Involve parent liaisons and truancy mentors that focus on providing supports to improve attendance. These staff are relatives or people known and trusted in the community.
- Expand student support services to provide on-site prevention with trained and qualified mental and behavioral health teams who support the behavioral, mental, and social-emotional needs of students and families.
- Participate with strong WIAA athletic program that includes varsity sports for both girls and boys.
- Adults are completing and getting a diploma through programs like the High School 21 program.
- Recognize that students have different goals and visions for their futures (stay local, college, etc.)

A critical issue discussed in the listening session centered around the intentional and focused programs and resources their schools are developing and implementing to support students' social, emotional, mental, and behavioral well-being. As Willie Frank, III, Wa He Lut Indian School Director of Education and School Board Chairman shared,

"For us as Indian people, we know it is not easy to ask for help. It's not easy to talk about our feelings or our emotions. The toughest kids going in, who are willing to talk to some of the counselors is huge. As we move forward, I think if there's anything we can all do to bring that awareness to the outside society and that it is okay to ask for help and to make sure that you have the right counselor and providers. When that happened, I was also seeing that parents and families would schedule appointments over at the ESD office. It wasn't just where they would come to Wa He Lut. They were actually making the time, outside of school hours to go and meet with these counselors. I've just seen a huge impact on the mental and behavioral side. Anything we can do to keep that awareness going is really important."



During our listening sessions, several STEC leaders discussed the importance of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Attendance and Reengagement Project in building system supports during the COVID-19 pandemic. From late 2021 to June 2024, the ESSER-funded project aimed to address the crisis of student engagement and disengagement experienced during and after the pandemic, especially among students and families furthest from educational justice. The project sought to expand attendance and reengagement supports across the education system by increasing staff capacity for direct service reengagement supports, such as case management and group supports for students, and by building or enhancing school and district systems, including attendance teams, tiered interventions, and actionable data. OSPI and the Association of Educational Service Districts (AESD) partnered with Educational Service Districts (ESDs), school districts, and STEC schools across the state to build system supports for students and families. STEC leaders noted that these grants were flexible, allowing each school and community to develop critical supports tailored to their specific needs. As a result of this work, Tribes continue to prioritize, expand, and sustain these efforts.

Muckleshoot Indian Tribal School
Muckleshoot Warrior's Path

BeqelSuł dxsXiliX SeGł

"I will be strong for my ancestors, I will be strong for my people, I will be strong for those to come."

Warriors Path is a culturally centered prevention program for middle and high school students offered through the Muckleshoot Tribal School. The program offers youth opportunities to explore and build relationships with their traditional lands and waterways, with one another, and with themselves. Activities are seasonal, culturally, and environmentally appropriate, and include harvesting, medicine making, exploring the land and water, canoe paddling, carving, fishing, hiking, and camping; all of which involve learning new skills and taking healthy risks. Along with being a positive alternative to drug use, the program offers drug and alcohol prevention education, as well as mental health promotion, integrated with cultural teachings facilitated by a multidisciplinary team of licensed clinical behavioral health professionals, cultural specialists, Elders, and educators. Staff who participate in this work have a shared commitment and passion to support students in this way.

Expanding STEC Educational Options

- Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways being offered in Sports Medicine, Business, Agriculture, Culinary Arts, Construction, and other CTE Pathways. CTE classes are connecting students to learn with Tribal departments and experts.
- Programs that get students out of the classroom and to traditional outdoor learning environments.
- Credit Recovery for students who need to make-up credits for graduation.
- Running Start where students are receiving college credit as they complete graduation requirements.
- College in the High School where students are getting dual credit.
- Skills Center to learn a trade or vocation.
- Off-campus opportunities to expose middle school and high school-aged students to different careers, industries, trade schools, colleges, and community colleges.

Chief Kitsap Academy (Suquamish Tribe)
Learning With and Through Culture

The Healing of the Canoe (HOC) project began almost two decades ago as an idea to develop a community- driven, culturally relevant, substance abuse and mental health intervention program for tribal youth. The resulting Culturally Grounded Life Skills for Youth Curriculum uses the Canoe Journey as a metaphor, providing youth with the skills needed to navigate their journey through life.

In our science class students are learning Ocean to Table. Students first go out to the beach and beach seine. Then, they clean the fish, smoke them, and can the smoked fish. They're able to practice their traditional fishing rights and enjoy being around other students. We're seeing that students are really engaging in science.

We've incorporated First Foods like nettles into our health curriculum. A Tribal member who is also a Tribal Council/School Board member, leads the class. Students travel off-campus to gather nettles and learn the benefits of cooking with nettles. The health teacher has followed up with a lab where students learned how to cook with nettles. In this same class, with another lab students learned how to sweeten their drinks with natural sweeteners instead of drinking processed sugar drinks.

When we began our culture circles, we had kids who were not willing to sing, not willing to dance, not willing to drum. For instance, one of our student's was hesitant to participate in song and dance. Then there was kind of an awakening in him when he went to Chief Kitsap Academy. Seeing him being a leader now and leading song and dance has been amazing. And thanks to our lead teacher, now all of our kids participate. We're at a point where we have to say, "Who gets to go do this for our song and dance presentations?" because we have so many kids who want to participate.

By learning this way (with and through culture), we're seeing all of our students gain self-confidence.

STEC School Leaders:

- Acknowledged supports from OSPI to complete reports and to grow First Peoples' Language, Culture and Oral Traditions (FPLCOT) certified language teachers.
- Noted that the school employs a significant number of Tribal members in classrooms, and also throughout our school.
- Are engaging new and entering teachers and administrators in trauma-informed instruction and community-based resources.

STEC Students Engagement with School-Governance.

Student leadership is supported across our STEC schools. Each school has its own evolving approaches and leadership structures. Some activities students have engaged in and issues they have raised at various STEC schools include:

- Implementing a salad bar as part of their school's lunch menu
- Public speaking
- Participating in community events
- Hosting a concession stand at games
- Working on student morale
- Raising a PRIDE flag

CKA (Suquamish) Salmon - Photo Credit: Brenda Guerrero

Challenges STEC Schools are Experiencing Shared During the Listening Sessions

- Recruiting, hiring, and retaining highly qualified teachers, administrators, substitutes, and bus drivers.
- Family support: Do the kids have the support at home? And if they don't, how do we get them the support?
- Transitions. Ensuring students and families are being supported as students transition into STEC schools and from STEC schools to public high schools.
- Student attendance post COVID-19.
- For BIE STEC schools: Navigating the differences between state and federal requirements and reporting requirements.
- Identifying which pieces of state legislation and RCWs are specific to STECs.
- Capacity to meet the needs of increasing numbers of students identified with significant specialized educational needs.

Recommendations for Continued Growth from our STEC partners.

"Our students deserve stability and consistency."

- Sarah Houseberg, Chief Kitsap Academy, Assistant Principal

- State and Federal
  - Develop policy and provide resources to implement transitional preschool that is 5-year-old to 6-year-old and includes parental agreement to participation, therapists' referrals.

- State Legislature/OSPI
  - Investment in a dedicated staff position within ONE with school-level knowledge specific to STEC reporting structure to support STEC school network.
  - Investment, policy, and technical assistance to support Tribes in establishing new STEC schools. Any further growth with the STEC network will involve Tribes establishing new schools. Supports may include:
    - 1-year planning and feasibility grants for Tribes
    - 3-5-year implementation grants to support the building of school infrastructure systems (i.e. school site, school infrastructures, classroom equipment, transportation systems, staffing, etc.).
  - Investment in Tribes' development of culturally-relevant assessments that are culturally relevant based on community standards and aligned with state learning standards.
  - Continued investment to update existing STEC school buildings, including feasibility and growth planning.
  - Attendance grants to develop, hire staff, and coordinate with tribal departments (i.e. tribal courts, family services, behavioral health program, anti-substance abuse program, wellness programs, etc.) to implement attendance programs.
    - Make connections with students and families about why education is important and relevant. For example, how can your education help support exercise your treaty rights as a fisherperson (i.e. communication, sales, etc.)?
    - Trades are in dire need of qualified individuals. Establish skill centers at tribal schools or nearby, allowing students to commute easily and return to their schools for other courses, activities, or sports. Align the learning geographically, comparatively, and competitively with the needs of each area.

- Invest in:
  - "Grow Your Own" pathways for para-educator, teacher, administrator, and First Peoples' Language, Culture, and Oral Traditions certification.
  - Initiatives that respond to the needs of Tribal communities to recruit, hire, and retain educators (i.e., teacher housing, involvement with state retirement system).
  - Supports to help develop First Peoples' language, culture, physical education, health, wellness, music, and arts curriculums.
  - Development of programs (mentorships, collaboration with teacher preparation programs) that support First People's certified teachers to learn teaching pedagogy and methodologies.

OSPI/ONE

- Specify in OSPI Bulletins whether legislation or RCWs apply to STECs.
- Develop an electronic STEC Policy Guide that supports STECs with state-required reporting of reports specific to STECs, including links to reports, OSPI lead contact information, due dates. STEC Policy Guide also includes a section with resources for Tribes interested in applying to become a STEC.
- Coordinate with BIE to align state and federal reporting requirements.

STEC Resources

STEC School Website

Are Tribal Compact Schools the Answer to Improving Native Student Success in Washington? by Teresa Winstead, John Hopkins, Michael Vendiola. Native Case Studies, The Evergreen State College (2018).

STEC Schools: ESSER Attendance and Reengagement Evaluation Case Study in partnership with OSPI. Published by the Puget Sound ESD Strategy, Evaluation, and Learning Team and OSPI. (2025).

Legislation in Action:
Government-to-Government Relationship and Educational Trust Responsibility

"We begin with the premise that education for Native American students is unique in that it implicates not only issues of language, "race"/ethnicity, social class, and other forms of social difference, but also issues of tribal sovereignty: the right of a people to self-government, self-education, and self-determination, including the right to linguistic and cultural expression according to local languages and norms"

(As cited in McCarty & Lee, 2014, p. 101).

Overview and Background

Tribal consultation is about relationships and honoring the unique trust responsibility that extends beyond mandated legislation to caring for our Native American children while also recognizing that deep collaboration benefits not only Native peoples but all students, schools, and communities. The relationship must be fostered between Tribal governments and representatives of state or federal education agencies. It's all about creating meaningful opportunities for dialogue, where valuable insights, feedback, and recommendations can be shared to shape education policies, programs, and services that truly impact the success of Native American students. This collaborative effort spans various areas such as curriculum development, teacher training, student assessment, special education needs, language preservation, economic contributions, and cultural heritage. By working together in this way, we can ensure that the educational journey of Native American students is enriched with respect for their unique cultural identity while empowering them to thrive academically and beyond.

Tribal consultation is also critical to ensuring Native American students receive a high-quality education that respects their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as their sovereignty and self-determination. This process goes beyond symbolic engagement; it is a legal and ethical obligation for state and federal education agencies to collaborate with Tribal governments in a government-to-government relationship. Policymakers must engage elected officials to elected officials, recognizing Tribal leadership as an equal partner in decision-making.

In the journey to provide Native American students with an education that truly honors their cultural and linguistic heritage, tribal consultation provides the foundation for this work. This process is not just about symbolic gestures; it represents a profound legal and ethical commitment for state and federal education agencies to work together with Tribal governments. It's about fostering a genuine government-to-government relationship where policymakers engage directly with elected Tribal officials, acknowledging them as equal partners in shaping educational decisions. By embracing this collaborative approach, we can ensure that Native American students receive the respect and quality of education they rightfully deserve, empowering their communities through sovereignty and self-determination.

Canoe Landing with Chairman Forsman and Former OSPI Superintendent Dorn
Photo Credit: Denny Sparr Hurtado (Skokomish)

Some key areas of consultation include:

1. Curriculum Development
   - Inclusion of accurate tribal history, culture, and governance
   - Alignment with Indigenous knowledge systems
   - Collaboration with Tribal Nations on culturally responsive content
2. Legal Responsibilities and Policy Implementation
   - Implementation of the Since Time Immemorial (JMLSTI) curriculum
   - Fulfillment of state and federal obligations regarding tribal education
   - Alignment with government-to-government agreements and consultation protocols
3. Teacher Preparation and Support
   - Teacher training in culturally responsive pedagogy
   - Ongoing professional development informed by Tribal priorities
   - Support for educators teaching tribal-specific content
4. Student Services and Educational Support
   - Equitable and culturally grounded student assessment
   - Inclusive special education services recognizing cultural and linguistic differences
   - Language revitalization programs in partnership with Tribes
   - Cultural preservation through school-community partnerships
5. Systemic Change and Equity
   - Dismantling structural barriers rooted in colonial and assimilationist policies
   - Preventing historical erasure in education policy and practice
   - Affirmation of Tribal sovereignty and self-determination in education

“I think that this kind of law under ESSA for meaningful consultation with school districts, really put some teeth into an effort that we had going forward for a number of years. Tribes have always wanted to work with the school districts, to enhance and provide services for our most precious resources (Our Children). This has now become the cornerstone of conversations between tribes and public school districts, serving as the model for how tribes consult with all public school districts in our state. I believe it has led to improvements and expansions in the efforts we've had ongoing since 2008.”

- Dr. Elese Washines, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation

Embedding Tribal consultation in education governance is a powerful step toward creating sustainable reforms that truly uplift Native American students and communities. By co-creating policies with Tribal leaders, we not only strengthen Tribal agency but also ensure that our education systems honor Tribal histories, languages, and traditions throughout Washington state and across the U.S.

Washington state’s educational Tribal consultation policies are deeply informed by federal frameworks and are more importantly aligned with the principles established in the 1989 Centennial Accord and the subsequent Millennium Agreement of 1999. These agreements underscore the government-to-government relationship between the state and federally-recognized tribes, ensuring that tribal sovereignty and treaty rights are respected in policy development.

Recognizing systemic inequities within U.S. education, former Senator John McCoy passionately advocated for enhanced training for school administrators and board directors to foster meaningful consultation and engage in respectful collaboration in policymaking, addressing cultural, education, and literacy gaps that have long impacted Native American education. A critical component of training is providing legal education on treaty rights, tribal sovereignty, and educational trust responsibility of the U.S. government to Native American people.

Groundbreaking federal and state legislation and policies continue to develop and advance thanks to leaders like former Senator John McCoy. One key piece of legislation that will be discussed later in this section is Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which legally obligates state and federal agencies to consult with Tribes. In Washington state, the legislature also recognized the need for accountability and meaningful Tribal consultation by passing House Bill 1426 (2021-22) and Substitute Senate Bill 5252 (2021-2022), exceeding the minimum ESSA requirements.
In this section of the report, we will explore the essential elements of Tribal consultation legislation, including its requirements and the various structures and logistics involved. We will also provide an overview of the progress made and current data related to the Administrator Government-to-Government Relationship Training led by OSPI's Office of Native Education. Most importantly, we'll discuss strategies to enhance Tribal consultation practices between school districts and Tribes, emphasizing that relationship building is crucial for fostering educational success among Native American children. Through respectful and meaningful collaboration, we can build a strong foundation for positive outcomes in education for all students.

Tribal Consultation Responsibilities and Progress

Given Washington's local control model for Local Educational Agencies (LEA), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) plays a crucial role in overseeing the implementation of these legislative measures. By engaging multiple partners, OSPI ensures that policy changes are effectively monitored and that Tribal communities are meaningfully included in shaping the future of education in the state.

The laws for this initiative were enacted in 2022, with funding available from July 1st. This created an urgent need for planning to meet compliance and uphold Tribal sovereignty in education policy. By the end of July 2022, the Tribal Consultation Program Supervisor was hired to develop and approve curriculum for school administrators. The priority was to quickly create, get feedback, and distribute training materials to meet legislative deadlines. The Strengthening Tribal Consultation (STC) training was scheduled for the following year, allowing incremental improvements and ensuring culturally responsive content aligned with legislative requirements. The following details highlight the type of consultations required.

Types of Consultation and Requirements

Every Student Succeeds Act

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) ensures new provisions for all students to succeed through stakeholder input. A key component for Native students and Tribal stakeholders is developing meaningful Tribal consultation. This involves respectful relationships between school districts, Tribes, and schools to foster informed policies and programs. In Washington state, the legislature recognized the need for accountability and meaningful Tribal consultation by passing House Bill 1426 (2021-22) and Substitute Senate Bill 5252 (2021-2022), exceeding the minimum ESSA requirements.

District Requirements

ESSA Tribal Consultation is required for all districts receiving Title VI Indian Education Grant Awards of more than $40,000 and/or that have a Native American student population of over 50 percent (ESEA section 1111(a)(1)(A)). Tribal consultation is required for all Title programs covered by ESSA, not solely Title VI Indian Education. Beginning with fiscal year 2017, affected Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must consult with Indian tribes, or those tribal organizations approved by the tribes located in the area served by the LEA before submitting plans or applications for the following programs under ESEA:

- Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by State and Local Education Agencies
- Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children
- Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth who are neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk
- Title II, Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction
- Title III, Part A: English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act
- Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) Grants
- Title IV, Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC)
- Title V, Part B, Subpart 2: Rural and Low-Income School Program
- Title VI, Part A, Subpart 1: Indian Education Formula Grants to LEAs

District Notification of Tribal Consultation Responsibilities

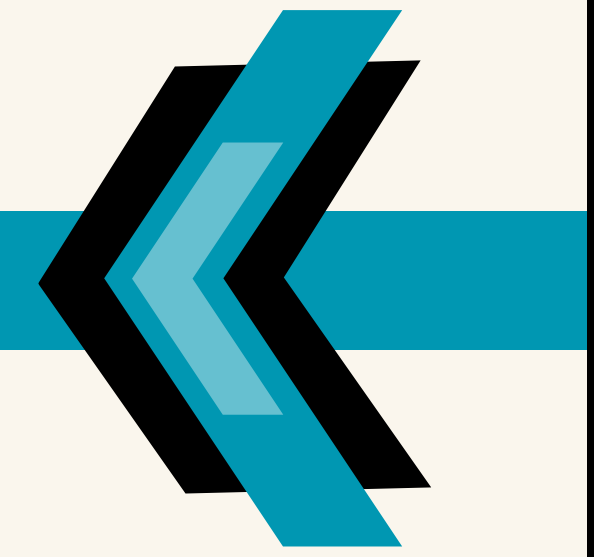
The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is dedicated to ensuring equitable access to critical education policies and initiatives through its Bulletin process. This approach keeps Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and the public informed about their responsibilities, funding allocations, and upcoming initiatives, especially those affecting Native American students. Each year, the Tribal Consultation Program Supervisor prepares a comprehensive bulletin released in the spring, after the notification of LEA Title VI Allocations from the Department of Education Office of Indian Education, particularly for LEAs with AI/AN student populations exceeding 50 percent enrollment. This bulletin provides guidance on ESSA Tribal Consultation requirements and STC Trainings. By offering consistent information, OSPI ensures district leadership, educators, and Tribal representatives receive timely updates, reducing communication gaps from technological or administrative issues. The process boosts the visibility of the Office of Native Education (ONE) by establishing clear expectations and strengthening government-to-government relationships, enhancing Tribal sovereignty in education policymaking. It also serves as a compliance tool for stakeholders—LEA administrators, Tribal leaders, and education officials—to conduct effective consultations.

Example Bulletin: Affirmation of Consultation with Tribal Representatives August 13, 2024

District Documentation

OSPI requires a yearly signed Affirmation of Tribal Consultation. OSPI will not release federal ESEA funds until all the below have been met:

1. Timely and meaningful consultation has been conducted with the required ESSA-designated Tribe(s).
2. The current school year's Affirmation of Tribal Consultation has been uploaded to OSPI's Electronic Grant Management System (EGMS) and includes all required signatures from your district, as part of the assurances in the Consolidated Grant Application for federal funds.
3. All School Board Members have completed the required 3-hour Strengthening Tribal Consultation (STC) Training. This training must be completed every three years and/or upon election to the school board. The ESSA Certificate of Completion must be submitted by the September deadline and may be submitted separately from the Affirmation of Tribal Consultation.
4. If all school board members have not completed the STC Training prior to signing the Affirmation of Tribal Consultation, do not indicate compliance on the form. Attendance must be verified through submission of the ESSA Certificate of Completion for each school board director.



"I think that this kind of law under ESSA for meaningful consultation with school districts, really put some teeth into an effort that we had going forward for a number of years. Tribes have always wanted to work with the school districts, to enhance and provide services for our most precious resources (Our Children). This has now become the cornerstone of conversations between tribes and public school districts, serving as the model for how tribes consult with all public school districts in our state. I believe it has led to improvements and expansions in the efforts we've had ongoing since 2008."

- Dr. Elese Washines, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation

Internal Monitoring of ESSA/ESEA Tribal Consultation Compliance

The Tribal Consultation Program Supervisor, working with the Federal Grants Program at OSPI, oversees the monitoring of ESSA Tribal Consultation and ESEA processes. This ensures LEAs and ESDs meet federal and state requirements, supporting Tribal sovereignty and equitable education access. OSPI uses the Electronic Grant Management System (EGMS) for all 295 Washington LEAs and 8 State Tribal Educational Compact Schools to apply for funding. This system allows the ONE and OSPI Grants Management team to monitor compliance in real-time. To maintain government-to-government relationships, LEAs must submit Affirmation of Tribal Consultation forms and Certificates of Strengthening Tribal Consultation within EGMS. These documents serve as official records of successful Tribal Consultation and require signatures from:

- The Superintendent of the LEA
- A Tribal designee, such as a Tribal Council member, Tribal Education Department representative, or Tribal Chairman

The Tribal Consultation Program Supervisor verifies compliance using a database to ensure all required signatures are present. Once validated, the grant process advances, completing the Title VI assurance. If discrepancies arise, the ONE team notifies the Federal Grants Program, and the LEA is informed via EGMS to correct deficiencies. The annual deadline for documentation submission is September 18th. Non-compliance results in the rejection of funding applications until corrective actions are taken. Each year, select Local Education Agencies (LEAs) undergo a Program Review and Support process to assess the effectiveness of their Tribal Consultation practices. Selected LEAs are required to provide the following documentation:

- Consultation agendas and meeting minutes
- Legal agreements, including Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and data-sharing agreements
- Correspondence records, such as emails, meeting invitations, and public hearing notices
- Documentation of adoption and implementation of the Since Time Immemorial (JMLSTI) curriculum, including:
    - School board meeting minutes
    - Professional development records
    - Tracking of JMLSTI lessons taught
    - Teacher and student evaluations
- Title VI Indian Parent Committee approvals on grant budgets and program goals

Once uploaded into EGMS, the Tribal Consultation Program Supervisor reviews these materials to determine if the LEA meets compliance or needs improvement. LEAs needing improvement receive coaching and must enhance their documentation within a year to maintain funding eligibility. OSPI's goal is for Tribal Consultation to be meaningful, equity-driven, and to reinforce Tribal sovereignty.

John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial Consultation

Academic progress among Native American students has been linked to culturally appropriate curricula that emphasize the distinctive features of each community. The history, culture, and government of the state's Tribal people must be taught in Washington's public schools. While the state mandates (Revised Code of Washington 28A.320.170) that school districts use the Since Time Immemorial curriculum, districts can modify it to include culturally relevant components of the nearest Tribe(s) into existing materials. Only districts selected for Comprehensive Review undergo scrutiny of the JMLSTI adoption and implementation policy. A previous report section was dedicated to discussing the JMLSTI in detail.

Title VI: Indian Education Formula Grant Initiation

Before submitting an initial plan or new application for a covered program under ESSA or Title VI, local education agencies (LEAs) must consult with Tribal education leaders in their area and the Parent Committee. In 2024-25, 73 districts received Title VI Indian Education grant resources. Forty of these programs required ESSA tribal consultation. Only districts selected for Comprehensive Review need to provide documentation of Parent Committee budget and grant goals, as this directly relates to the LEA and the Department of Education Office of Indian Education. The Title VI grant is a direct relationship with the U.S. Department of Education and is not under OSPI oversight.

Title VII: Impact Aid

Impact Aid Title VII is a federal program under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It provides financial assistance to local school districts that lose revenue due to tax-exempt federal properties, such as military bases, Indian lands, or low-income housing, or that serve federally-connected children. Indian Policies and Procedures (IPP) must be formulated in partnership with Tribes. IPPs predate ESSA Tribal Consultation requirements, and Title VII is outside the ESSA parameters for OSPI review.

Johnson O'Malley Grant

The Johnson-O'Malley Program (JOM) is a federally authorized initiative supporting the education of eligible Native American students. Established under the Johnson-O'Malley Act of 1934, the program operates under Part 273 of Title 25 of the Code of Federal Regulations, ensuring compliance with federal education standards and Tribal sovereignty principles. The amended Johnson-O'Malley Act authorizes contracts for educating AI/AN students in public and formerly private schools. These contracts offer supplemental educational services, addressing Native American students' unique needs through culturally responsive curricula, academic support, and dropout prevention programs. The program is administered under an educational plan approved by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), which outlines specific objectives tailored to eligible Native American students. This framework ensures Tribal communities retain decision-making authority over educational programming, reinforcing Tribal sovereignty and self-determination in education policy. The JOM grant is a direct relationship with the Department of the Interior BIE and is not under OSPI oversight.

Tribal Consultation Curriculum and Training

School Administrator Government-to-Government Relationships Training

House Bill 1426 (HB 1426) (2022) mandates that when renewing an administrator certificate on or after July 1, 2023, continuing administrators must attend a 5-hour Government-to-Government Relationships Training focusing on:

- Introduction to Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State
- Boarding Schools and Historical Trauma
- Identifying Native Students in Public Schools
- Agents of Change: School Leadership Behaviors and Dispositions
- Creation of Government-to-Government Systems
- Additional Module (beyond original 5 hours):
    - CTE-specific curriculum focusing on Tribal economic structures
    - Building CTE frameworks with Tribal input

Consultation Feedback and Approvals

Washington State's School Administrator Government-to-Government Relationships Training ensures Tribal sovereignty and self-determination in educational leadership. Legislative mandates require this training to be approved by the Tribal Leaders Congress and the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, emphasizing Tribal oversight in educational policy without compromising curricular integrity. Federally-recognized Tribes within Washington state can develop their own curricula, authentically representing Indigenous knowledge. These curricula must meet approval standards to maintain cultural integrity and legislative alignment, preventing misrepresentation of Native perspectives.

Curriculum Development and Delivery Methods

House Bill 1429 (HB1429) mandates that all principals, assistant principals, program administrators, CTE directors, and superintendents complete five hours of Administrator Government-to-Government training annually. Each year, from July 1st to June 30th, about 1,000 to 1,500 administrators need recertification, with documentation due by January 1st. While the legislation outlined curriculum topics, it did not specify delivery methods. ONE collaborated with Tribal content experts and representatives of the Association of Washington School Principals' Association (AWSP) in the development of the curriculum and modules. OSPI hired subject matter experts after a vetting process. A significant partnership with the National Native Child Trauma Center (NNCTC) resulted in an informal agreement for NNCTC to provide an hour of training on Historical Trauma and Boarding Schools. NNCTC is reimbursed for travel expenses for in-person sessions. Other contractors include a Washington State Teacher of the Year and a Building Administrator with extensive Tribal consultation experience.

A synchronous hybrid model was chosen for this large-scale training initiative, which required venues with advanced audio-visual (AV) capabilities due to the challenges posed by the virtual format. Universities, hotels, and conference centers have provided the necessary infrastructure. Virtual training can present additional challenges, including:

- Internet and power outages require clear communication to participants about their individual responsibility for ensuring stable access.
- Attendance verification must be tracked through Zoom login data, using identifiable participant names to prevent unauthorized access.
- Documentation issues occur when Zoom links are shared or sessions are broadcast to non-registered participants, undermining participant tracking and compliance.

Further Challenges

Each hybrid training event costs $10,000, limiting the number OSPI's Office of Native Education (ONE) can offer. To maintain training integrity and accommodate those who miss hybrid events, a Native State Minority business developed asynchronous modules. These ADA-compliant modules require pdEnroller registration and are hosted on Canvas. Initial technical issues with pdEnroller present challenges; while some are resolved, transferring clock hours from Canvas remains problematic due to lack of integration. Recognizing Tribal contributions to economic development, two additional training hours address Career and Technical Education (CTE) needs. These focus on Tribal economic structures and aligning CTE frameworks with state standards while highlighting Tribal financial roles. WACTA partnered with ONE for a pre-conference event at minimal cost thanks to venue support.

Tribes within Washington significantly impact the economy, generating $7.4 billion in activity and creating jobs across sectors like hospitality and infrastructure. The new curriculum aims to equip educators with knowledge about Tribal ventures for culturally relevant opportunities aligning with state standards. However, accessibility issues persist as the two-hour training is only synchronous, limiting participation options for educators wanting to include Tribal perspectives in teaching. More flexible learning formats could broaden access across urban and rural regions. Despite progress, challenges remain: No Tribe has pursued formal partnerships due to limited education departments or resources in rural areas responsible for multiple LEAs. This highlights the need for structural support ensuring sustainable Tribal education initiatives statewide while maintaining curriculum integrity.

Progress Made by OSPI ONE

The introduction of this new training initiative by OSPI Office of Native Education (ONE) marked a significant step toward equitable education reform, ensuring that administrators are equipped with the knowledge necessary to engage in meaningful Tribal consultation. To assess the effectiveness and engagement of the curriculum, satisfaction and feedback surveys were implemented, providing real-time insights into participant experiences. These surveys allowed for immediate improvements to the training structure and informed critical adjustments for the second cohort. In addition to formal surveys, Padlets were utilized as an interactive tool to collect qualitative feedback from participants. This approach enabled contractors to receive direct input on their effectiveness, ensuring that training delivery remained responsive, impactful, and aligned with cultural and Tribal sovereignty principles.

Now, as the training enters its third year, the next phase of evaluation will focus on long-term impact assessment. A comprehensive survey will be created and conducted among all the administrators who have completed the training and examining:

- Information retention and application of key concepts.
- Student policy changes resulting from administrator engagement.
- Data policy modifications to improve AI/AN education reporting
- Pedagogical shifts in instructional approaches and curriculum integration.
- Advancing Equity Through Data-Driven Policy Adjustments.

By systematically analyzing these critical areas, OSPI ONE aims to ensure that the training does not merely serve as a compliance requirement but fosters sustainable, justice-oriented change within Washington's K-12 institutions. The findings will inform future curriculum enhancements, strengthen Tribal consultation practices, and reinforce Indigenous agency in shaping education policy. Another issue has been creating a planned routine schedule and advertising among partner organizations. Entering the third year, the end of June continues to be prime opportunity for administrators with additional events in late Fall and one 15-30 days before the January 1st recertification paperwork submittal deadline.

Administrator Training to Date (Certification Year = July 1 – June 30):

- 2023–2024: 5 G2G options (Certification Training Year: July 1 – April 30)
- 2024–2025: 8 G2G options (Certification Training Year: June 1 – February 1)
- 2025–2026: 6 anticipated G2G options (Certification Training Year: June 1 – January 1, with 3 in June, 2 in October, and 1 in December)

Preliminary Satisfaction Survey Data:

- 92% Satisfied/Very Satisfied with subject matter topics presented
- 90% Satisfied/Very Satisfied with the amount of material presented
- 47% selected "No Preference" (largest response) when asked about in-person vs. virtual delivery
- Most liked aspect: Introduction to new topics from presenters in a storytelling fashion
- Most disliked aspect: "Sit & Get" format

Introductory Educator Education on AI/AN (Single Zoom Poll Results N = 449):

- 70% of educators attended K–12 school in Washington State
- 42% received very little education on AI/AN content in K–12
- 62.5% received zero education on AI/AN content in college
- 85% received zero education on AI/AN content in their teacher education program
- 78.5% teach on or near Tribal lands or an Indian reservation
- 40.5% were aware their district had a Title VI program
- 60.5% did not know if their district had a JOM program
- 36% selected their current school because it is on or near a reservation
- 14 administrators self-identified as AI/AN

Administrator Government-to-Government Relationship Training Participation Data

2023–2024:

- 5 General Trainings
- 1,539 individual registrations for synchronous sessions
- 961 registrations for asynchronous modules
- 902 administrators required recertification in Certification Year 2023–2024

2024–2025:

- 8 Trainings (6 General, 1 AWSP/WASA Pre-Conference, 1 WACTA Post-Conference)
- 1,200 individual registrations for synchronous sessions
- 74 registrations for asynchronous modules

2025–2026:

- Data TBD

Strengthening Tribal Consultation for School Directors Training

Substitute Senate Bill 5252 (2022) mandates that starting September 1, 2024, school board members, superintendents, and other staff required to perform Tribal consultation under Title VI of the federal ESSA (P.L. 114-95, 20 U.S.C. Sec. 1001 et seq., 20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.) must complete and certify a 3-hour Strengthening Tribal Consultation (STC) training focusing on:

- Native Student Identification
- Data Sharing
- Implementation of Tribal history, culture and government – Since Time Immemorial

The Strengthening Tribal Consultation (STC) training is a transformative journey, empowering Washington state school directors with the essential knowledge to foster meaningful government-to-government relationships with federally recognized tribes. ONE collaborated with tribal education experts, the WSSDA Tribal Ambassador, and other regional WSSDA representatives to develop modules for this course. This vital course delves into the rich historical context, navigates federal racial/ethnic data reporting policies, and illuminates best practices in Tribal consultation. By embracing this training, school boards are inspired to champion equity, honor sovereignty, and lead with culturally responsive governance. In alignment with Washington state law's vision for excellence in leadership, school directors embark on this path alongside two other mandatory courses that collectively shape a future of understanding and collaboration.

- Strengthening Tribal Consultation (STC) Training – Focuses on Tribal sovereignty, best practices for consultation, and advocacy for Native students.
- Open Government Training (RCW 42.30.205) – Covers public transparency laws, ethical governance, and compliance with open meeting requirements.
- Cultural Competency, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training (SB 5044) – Addresses institutional racism, promotes cultural proficiency, and provides strategies for leading equitable education systems.

To empower and inspire new school directors, the Board Boot Camp offers invaluable training on roles and governance. WSSDA provides the "Serving on Your Local School Board Handbook," a beacon of effective policy guidance. The Strengthening Tribal Consultation (STC) training, required by state law under ESSA, ensures that LEA leaders engage meaningfully with tribes, reinforcing sovereignty and educational equity for Native American students. Notifications through the ESSA Affected LEAs List Bulletin aid in maintaining compliance.

In response to staff changes, a new registration system is being developed to track completion and uphold accountability. Despite its cost-effectiveness and minimal resource requirements, the STC model faces attendance challenges due to directors' travel schedules. To overcome this hurdle, asynchronous online modules have been introduced for greater flexibility. Funded by the R16 Comprehensive Center, these modules offer comprehensive instruction in Tribal consultation.

Washington State stands at the forefront of prioritizing Native American representation in education through equity-driven policies and mandatory training programs focused on Tribal sovereignty and student advocacy. This visionary approach aligns institutional mandates with community initiatives by ensuring accessible formats that keep Indigenous voices central in policy development.

From 2023 onward, WSSDA will hold annual regional meetings with tribal councils to foster meaningful government-to-government relationships between tribes and school district boards of directors. Data from these meetings will be collected annually by WSSDA as we continue this journey toward inclusive education where every voice is heard and valued. Together, we are building bridges for a brighter future!

While in-person meetings are generally encouraged, it's important to recognize that virtual meetings can be a practical alternative when cost or other factors impede participants' ability to travel. In either setting, participants should thoughtfully engage with one another to discuss issues of mutual concern and work to:

- Identify the extent and nature of the achievement gap and develop targeted strategies to close it.
- Emphasize the importance of creating inclusive educational environments where Native students have access to the resources and support necessary for academic success.
- Ensure school boards recognize the value of adopting curriculum that reflects the histories, cultures, governments, and lived experiences of federally recognized Tribes.
    - This enhances Native student engagement and success.
    - While in-person meetings are encouraged for their collaborative benefits, it's important to consider virtual options when cost or other factors hinder participants' ability to travel. In such cases, thoughtful discussions should focus on addressing shared concerns.
    - All students benefit from learning about the histories and perspectives of their Native peers and neighbors.

Regional meetings must also include discussions on:

- Tribal consultation training and the training requirements established under Section 1 of this act.
- Identification of Native students, including adherence to federal identification guidelines for American Indian and Alaska Native students.
- Data-sharing practices between school districts and federally-recognized Tribes.
- Consultations between individual school boards and local federal- recognized Tribes.

Number of Strengthening Tribal Consultation (STC) Trainings to Date:

- 2023: 4 STC training options
- 2024: 13 STC training options
- 2025: STC trainings to begin November 2025, with full rollout in Fall 2025

Participation Data (First Year):

- 274 individuals trained across 42 districts
- 98% completion rate

Preliminary Satisfaction Data:

- 89.6% Satisfied/Very Satisfied with subject matter topics presented
- 94.4% Satisfied/Very Satisfied with the amount of material presented
- 47% reported No Preference for delivery mode (largest response)
- 41.2% preferred In-Person, 41.8% No Preference, 17% preferred Virtual

Additional Feedback Highlights:

- 58.1% responded Neutral when asked if STC needs to be more research-based
- 47.2% responded Neutral when asked if more social activities should be incorporated

Participants highlighted their favorite training aspects, including learning about Tribal Sovereignty, data policies, tribal consultation recommendations, practical presentations, and storytelling/humor, videos, and question and answer opportunities. Some of their least favorite parts: They noted that it was too short/rushed, needed more JMLSTI content and evening timing.

Impact Stories of Tribal Consultation and Trainings

Longstanding Partnership Between Nisqually Tribes and the North Thurston School Distract

This past March, the North Thurston Public Schools and the Nisqually Indian Tribe in honoring the life and legacy of Billy Frank Jr. They advertised “the event is free for families. Enjoy presentations and activities for all ages, including the chance to see a model of the Billy Frank Jr. statue. Food trucks will be on-site and available for purchases. Everyone is invited!”

The over 25-year partnership between North Thurston Public Schools (NTPS) and the Nisqually Tribal Council has fostered a strong, enduring relationship rooted in Tribal Consultation, trust-building, and shared commitment. Jerad Koepp, Native Student Program Specialist at NTPS, emphasized, “the relationship, as you can imagine, didn't start overnight.” Together, the district, the Tribe, and the broader Native American community co-designed professional development, created dual-credit opportunities with a Native focus, and planned annual community-wide events such as the Billy Frank Jr. Day highlighted in the flyer. These achievements reflect a shared vision for education—one that prioritizes equity, representation, and meaningful learning experiences for all students.

> *"Educating the school district about what government-to-government is very important. The first meeting we ever had with the Superintendent, it was like crickets. Nobody wanted to talk. Nobody wanted to say anything. But my last meeting when I was the chair we had over 15 agenda topics. It's so cool to start to see that kind of growth. I think for our Tribes, trying to break those walls down is very important right now, and it can be challenging.”* –Willie Frank, III (Nisqually Tribe)

The impact of this partnership extends beyond educational outcomes; it strengthens community ties and fosters mutual respect. As Jerad highlights, such collaborations demonstrate that “a whole community can enjoy the excitement of the authenticity of a learning experience. That's how it is sustainable, and it has that sense of pride.”
Together, they built a Native studies course at River Ridge High School that Jerad described as “western curriculum with Indigenous content.” It aims to build historical literacy and critical humility for both students and teachers, empowering Native student voice and agency through contemporary curriculum.

Through bi-annual Tribal Consultation meetings, the district and Tribal Council have worked side by side to expand student growth opportunities, ensuring that all learners are prepared for “rewarding careers, fulfilling lives, and compassionate global citizenship,” stated Jerad.

The Native Studies class has also created a unique student-led Tribal Consultation, a transformative approach to Indigenous Education. The program has pioneered a groundbreaking initiative by introducing a Student Consultation model within Tribal Consultation training. This train-the-teacher model is a creative demonstration of Mastery-Based Learning, where students apply their expertise beyond the classroom, reinforcing Native ways of knowing.

Jerad expressed his appreciation for the partnership, “I'm really grateful for our district and all the leaders I've worked with. There's a genuine understanding that the more involved the communities our students belong to are in education, the more it benefits everyone.”

Exercising Tribal Sovereignty to Improve Native Education and Accountability
Interview with Tammy James, Colville Tribe's Education and Employment Director

The growing relationship between the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and regional school districts underscored the importance of meaningful tribal consultation. Tammy James, the Colville Tribe's Education and Employment Director, shared her passionate insights on the evolving relationship and its impact on the Native American education, policy, and practices. It's evident that together, education is better.

"Washington State is unique in how we interact with our school districts," Tammy James noted, emphasizing the collaborative approach. She discussed the importance of making consultations "timely and meaningful," stating that it wasn't just about adhering to a process, but also about fostering genuine relationships.

In the early days following the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the tribes encountered challenges. Tammy recollected, "Initially when ESSA first got passed, we were getting notifications from schools and they were like, here, can you sign this?" This encapsulated the initial struggles they faced—a mere formality without true engagement. Recognizing the need for clarity and structure, the tribes took the initiative to develop an internal policy that defined what consultation should look like.

"We recognized the need to create an internal policy with the tribe outlining like what consultation means," she reflected. It was a process of education, not just for the tribal leaders, but for the entire community. "Every year it gets better and better," she added, highlighting the ongoing commitment to refine their approach.

The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation created a Tribal Consultation policy and formed to assist their partnership with school districts to better reflect their goals and aspirations for their students. Tammy also shared how essential community feedback was: "A lot of our families experience different things, and we need that feedback in order for us to give effective recommendations to the school." This emphasis on grassroots feedback of their consultation efforts, allowing the tribe to advocate thoroughly on behalf of their students.

Another significant achievement was the establishment of a consultation timeline. "In order for us to make an impact on the next academic year's budget, we had to have it sooner," Tammy explained. By setting firm deadlines, they ensured that the voices of families were represented in a timely manner.
In addition, the Colville Tribes celebrated each school district for their unique strengths. For example, they recognized and honored a truly outstanding partner in education—Superintendent Michael Porter of the Omak School District. His recognition letter stated

"What I most admire is his honesty. He doesn't make excuses for the achievement gaps Native students continue to face. He acknowledges them directly—and then immediately moves to ideas, solutions, and collaboration. He always asks, "How can we work together?" And he means it. He is student-centered in everything he does. He never makes the work about himself. He honors the intent and meaning of tribal consultation—not as a legal requirement, but as a living, relational commitment to shared responsibility and mutual respect."

Listening Session Summary and Call to Action
The voice of Tribes in guiding the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, school districts, and schools in educating and nurturing our most precious resource—our Native American children—cannot be overstated. The following sections encompass what meaningful Tribal consultation signifies to our Tribal Leaders, educators, and Subject Matter Experts, as articulated during our listening sessions. Further, each section provides guidance and intergenerational tribal wisdom on how to strengthen our relationships and shared work to better serve our Native children, families, and communities through education.

Building and Maintaining Trust and Relationships:
Establish genuine partnerships by engaging in regular, open dialogue between Tribes and school districts. Trust is the foundation of effective collaboration - it is clear to Tribal leaders and communities when school board members and administrators are merely going through the motions, "checking a box," and when it is genuine. Co-planning community events (e.g., the Billy Frank, Jr. Annual Celebration) or professional development for all administrators, educators, and staff that take place in Tribal communities are great ways to build trust and deepen partnership. There is no substitute for spending time together immersed in learning from the rich cultural practices, traditions, and oral histories of Tribal communities. These forms of knowledge and experience cannot be acquired through textbooks or training. Based on the evidence from the stories shared in the listening sessions, the most creative, impactful, and sustainable work was accomplished through and in relationships.

True Government-to-Government Requires All the Right People at the Table: According to the listening sessions, true government-to-government partnerships require mutual agreement on who should be present during Tribal consultation sessions and how often these meetings should occur. Many Tribal leaders prefer the participation of school board members, the superintendent, and principals in these sessions. For tribes responsible for consulting with multiple schools and districts, coordination is essential to find a mutually convenient date for everyone to gather. This approach respects the tribal leaders' time and investment and helps school leadership learn from each other's best practices in partnering with Tribes.

Furthermore, Tribal education managers, directors, school Tribal liaisons, school counselors, and teachers working directly with students should attend at appropriate times to have a voice and stay informed. Otherwise, consultation meetings might miss key information needed for decisions, and those decisions may not reach the educators directly involved. At the statewide level, the Superintendent of Public Instruction committed to an annual meeting with Tribal leaders and participates in the Centennial Accord, a annual gathering between the Governor's Office, state representatives, and Tribes. The OSPI Office of Native Education is responsible for implementing and coordinating the educational needs of Native American students across the education system.

Establishing Clear, Respectful Protocols and Expectations:
Developing formal consultation protocols outlines how Tribes and school districts will communicate, make decisions, set timelines, and resolve conflicts. Clear protocols, such as the Colville Tribes' ESSA Tribal Consultation Policy (Appendix D), clarify expectations and ensure that consultations are respectful, productive, and acknowledge tribal sovereignty. Tribal Liaison roles at schools, along with Tribal education managers and directors employed by Tribes, are crucial in involving the right people. Clarifying the point of contact for Tribes and schools helps avoid communication breakdowns and ensures information is widely disseminated. Tribal education managers and directors are valuable resources who understand the needs of Native students and can assist with follow-up on Tribal consultation meetings. The OSPI Office of Native Education can assist with statewide communication and connect with the appropriate individuals when matters are unclear.

Provide Regular Tribal Consultation and Cultural Competency Training:
Offer cultural competency training to educators, administrators, and school boards to ensure they understand and respect tribal sovereignty, as well as the Tribe's diverse cultures, histories, and perspectives. This knowledge is crucial for creating a learning environment that respects and incorporates the cultural identities of Native students. When possible, conducting trainings in Tribal communities deepens the relationships, knowledge, and mutual respect. Washington State's investment in the OSPI Office of Native Education and the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs is crucial for leading these Tribal consultation trainings. Federal and state legislation reinforces the unique educational trust responsibility.

Shared Decision-Making is Not Just a Concept, it's a Practice to Embrace.
Involving tribal representatives in decision-making processes related to education policies that affect Native American students is not just a suggestion, it's a necessity. Their input is invaluable in creating policies that are culturally relevant, respectful, and that foster a sense of belonging and positive identity for Native American students to succeed. Furthermore, Tribes invest a significant amount of time, money, and resources in not only caring for their children but also for all children.

Prioritize Resource Allocation for Tribal Collaboration:
Ensure equitable distribution of resources to support Native education programs. Adequate funding is necessary to implement culturally responsive and respectful curricula, support language and cultural revitalization efforts, and improve educational outcomes for Native students. Time is one of the most valuable resources. This collaborative effort should focus on gathering resources and authorizing a comprehensive set of educational laws, policies, and administrative procedures that honor the intent of treaties and uphold the inherent rights of tribal governments. Furthermore, it's critical to support and allocate time for professional development opportunities that are immersed in the Tribal community, such as paying for clock hours. Additionally, participants in the listening sessions have requested that these professional development opportunities be mandatory, not optional. Unfortunately, when professional development is not mandatory, Tribal leaders have observed that participation tends to be low, which diminishes the perceived importance of Tribal sovereignty and relations. Many Tribes are willing to supplement or co-fund professional development and learning opportunities—whether it is paying for meals or providing speakers and trainers. Some Tribes pay teachers during the summer to connect with their students and learn about their Tribal histories.

Securing our Futures: Call-to-Action for Continued Educational Reform

In summary, we offer a call-to-action highlighting important recommendations in each section, which we believe can help secure our futures, especially for our children, our most valuable resource. Investing in Native education is crucial for healing our state and country, as the history of the U.S. education system has long stripped away Native identities, language, culture, educational self-determination, and the joy of learning. There is a unique obligation to restore and heal. We thank you for joining us in this call to action!

Securing our Futures - Photo Credit: Denny Sparr Hurtado (Skokomish)

Overview of The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) Recommendations 2014-2025

Enhancements to Native American student success in Washington state are steadily contributing to longstanding equity improvements in an evolving state-of-education challenge. Entities like the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) were established under RCW 28A.300.136 to synthesize findings and recommendations from the 2008 achievement gap studies into a comprehensive implementation plan. The studies revealed significant gaps in educational outcomes related to race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Throughout the history of publicly available EOGOAC reports, analysis has revealed themes pertinent to recommendations, including the following: disaggregating data, cultural competency, language endorsements, mental and behavioral health, attendance, accountability, equity/access, gap research, homelessness, and WISSP. By year, recommendations have included:

·2014–2016: Reducing Suspensions and Expulsions
·2014-2018: Cultural Competencies
·2020: Elevating Social Emotional Learning (SEL) as a Top Priority
·2021: Addressing Institutional Racism
·2022: School Board Leadership & Representation
·2023: Recruiting and Retaining Educators of Color
·2024: Mastery-Based Learning (MBL)
·2017-2025: Family and Community Engagement

Centering Language and Culture: Pathways to Tribal Education Sovereignty and Self-Determination

Native American tribal sovereignty includes the inherent right of each Tribal nation to educate its children with a focus on fluency in their tribal languages and cultural knowledge systems. To accomplish this, the cultivation of more Tribal language teachers is crucial as it is supporting the professional development of Tribal language teachers. Policies must be developed that support the revitalization and growth of Tribal languages. Recommendations to reach these goals include:

- Cultivate more tribal language teachers through:
  - The development of local models like Makah's Inclusionary Practices Project, Inchelium's Immersion Pilot, and the Spokane Tribe's N3 Pilot Program, which is based on the Paul Creek Indigenous language fluency transfer program.
  - Continued and enhanced state-funded Tribal Language grants.
  - Ensuring "livable wages", comparable benefits, and a common pay model and structure.
  - Investing in Tribal language teacher professional development that builds language fluency and incorporates tribal historical knowledge.
  - Providing training in classroom management, social and behavioral supports, and culturally relevant, sustaining, and revitalizing pedagogies tailored to language- and culture-specific classrooms.
  - Offering teacher preparation courses and professional development opportunities with flexible schedules and/or delivery methods.
  - Integrating strategies like Peer Learning Communities.
  - Learning more about how course codes can apply to language and culture education and supporting students in earning credits related to community-necessitated workforce development opportunities.
- Advocate for a holistic approach to education, while emphasizing the need for the development of policies centered on:
  - Protecting Tribal language and culture education given the federal political climate.
  - Establishing Tribal languages as an official language of the associated Nation.
  - Integrating language fluency into educational policy.
  - Collaborative efforts between the State and Tribal nations to develop comprehensive policies that define, prioritize, and provide funding for fluency training.

Our Children, Our Most Valuable Resource: Native American Student Identification and Data Sovereignty

Accurate identification of Native American students is a matter of educational equity, tribal sovereignty, and accountability. Our current data systems and demographic policies fail to reflect the full scope of what it means to be a Native individual—racially, culturally, politically. The consequences of the continued use of these systems lead to a loss of funding for schools and districts, missed services for students, and the erosion of visibility of Native youth within public education. Here are a few recommendations on how to better collect student data:

- Amend state education policy to mandate inclusive and detailed race and ethnicity data practices for K-12 and higher education. This includes requiring the collection, reporting, and public display of race/ethnicity data using maximum representation or other inclusive demographic categorization principles.
- Standardize statewide tribal data-sharing agreements by establishing a legislative framework. This would require all school districts to develop data-sharing agreements with every tribal nation represented in their student body, not just those located within or near district boundaries.
- Require annual demographic audits, Title VI follow-ups, and SIS alignment by implementing a statutory mandate for all districts to conduct yearly audits of student race/ethnicity data. For any student identifying as Native American, follow-up must include outreach by a Title VI coordinator or designee to determine tribal enrollment, descendant status, and Title VI eligibility.

Legislation That Has Honored Our Children and Tribal Educational Sovereignty

We encourage Tribal leadership, community members, district and school leaders, educators, and students to stay informed about legislative processes. We urge them to participate, collaborate, and support elected officials at local, regional, state, and federal levels to advance policies that benefit our Native children. The following are important legislation in action that needs continued support, advocacy, and expansion.

Legislation in Action: John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State Curriculum Implementation

The JMLSTI curriculum has an established history within Washington state's education system. The following recommendations support continued relationship building between Tribes, districts, and higher education institutions as well as opportunities to renew and grow tribal-specific curriculum resources. The recommendations also serve to ensure that our educators and administrators have the necessary pre-service and in-service training to provide every student across our state with an ample opportunity to learn about tribal sovereignty, culture, history and government with Tribal nations.

Call to action: *Two bills have recently come before the legislature to better support districts by establishing a clear deadline for implementation and directing OSPI and OSPI ONE to monitor implementation across the state, ensuring that JLMSTI is taught with fidelity. Although SB 5570 did not pass the 2025 legislative session, the bill will be reintroduced when the 2026 legislative session begins in January next year.*

Recommendations for the Office of Native Education (ONE):

- Update, revise, and maintain the JMLSTI curriculum resource, in collaboration with Tribal partners, to reflect current issues impacting Tribes and all citizens. Continue to /make this an "Educator and Tribe Friendly" resource that is regional-specific, visually engaging, and has the capacity to integrate videos and other multimedia shared by Tribes.
- Update, revise, and implement JMSTI professional development and training sessions in collaboration with Tribal partners.
- Develop a quarterly newsletter highlighting promising practices. Send to Tribes, internal OSPI staff and departments, district partners, teacher and administrator organizations, Tribes, and Tribal education organizations.
- Update or add a component to the JMLSTI curriculum requirement and promising practices to the School Directors' government-to-government training and Principal government-to-government recertification training.

- EOGOAC monitor and report on the inclusion of JMLSTI best practices implementation for statewide cultural competence training (4SHB 1541) for school directors, superintendents, principals, administrators, and teachers.
- Align JMLSTI curriculum implementation with teacher and administrator evaluations.
- Develop a systemic rubric and reporting system for school districts and teacher preparation programs based on a phased-in approach to implementation and include:
  - Relationship-building.
  - District-wide implementation plan.
  - Professional learning for educators, administrators (school and district), school and university staff.
  - Implementation reports.
  - Continued policy development:
  - Require JMLSTI professional learning as part of teacher and administrator certification and re-certification.
  - Standardize the credit level for stand-alone JMLSTI higher education teacher preparation programs.
  - Establish a timeline requiring districts and teacher preparation programs to implement JMLSTI curriculum.
  - Investment to support:
  - Tribes in developing curriculum in collaboration with district partners.
  - Tribes in developing and implementing local and regional professional learning.
  - Districts with curriculum development and professional learning.
  - ONE's revisions, updates, communication, and system reporting development and implementation.
  - Higher education convenings, in collaboration with Tribal and district partners, to share promising practices in relationship-building and implementing JMLSTI curriculum with courses.

Legislation in Action: State-Tribal Education Compact Schools

The establishment of tribally-controlled schools reaffirm and assert tribal sovereignty and self-determination. These schools address the educational needs of Native children, youth, and communities, aligning more closely with the values, teachings, and traditions of Native ways of knowing and being. Over the past 12 years, eight compacts have been developed, and several Tribes are in contact with ONE to learn more about the compacting process. Recommendations for STEC schools include:

- Recommendations at the State and Federal levels
  - Develop policy and provide resources to implement transitional preschools.
  - Recommendations for the Washington State Legislature/OSPI
  - Collaborate with ONE to invest in a dedicated staff with school-level specific knowledge to support STEC school networks.
  - Provide funding, policy, and technical assistance to support Tribes in establishing new STEC schools. This may include planning, feasibility, and implementation of grants for Tribes.
  - Invest in Tribal development of assessments that are culturally relevant, based on community standards, and aligned with state learning standards.
  - Provide funding to update existing STEC school buildings, as well as STEC school feasibility and growth planning processes.
  - Offer grants to hire and develop staff and to coordinate with tribal departments to implement attendance programs.
  - Establish trade skill centers at or near Tribal schools.
  - Invest in:
- “Grow Your Own” pathways for para-educator, teacher, administrator, and First Peoples’ Language, Culture, and Oral Traditions certification.
- Initiatives to recruit, hire, and retain educators.
- Programs that develop and reinforce First Peoples’ language, culture, physical education, health, wellness, music, and arts curriculums.
- Programs and initiatives aim to certify more teachers with the First People's Language, Culture, and Oral Traditions certification and support their integration into the school.
- OSPI/ONE recommendations:
  - Specify in bulletins whether legislation or RCWs apply to STECs.
  - Develop an electronic STEC Policy Guide that supports STECs with state-required reporting. Includes a section with resources for Tribes interested in applying to become a STEC.
  - Coordinate with BIE to align state and federal reporting requirements.

Legislation in Action: Government-to-Government Relationship and Educational Trust Responsibility

Tribal guidance and consultation are crucial in educating and nurturing our Native American children. Tribal leaders, educators, and subject matter experts have articulated what meaningful tribal consultation signifies to their communities, encapsulated in the following recommendations:

- Build and maintain trust and relationships by engaging in regular and open dialogue between Tribes and school districts. Trust is the foundation of effective collaboration and can be developed through:
  - Co-planning community events or professional development for all administrators, educators, and staff.
  - Spending time together immersed in learning from the rich cultural practices, traditions, and oral histories of Tribal communities.
- Bring all the appropriate people together. True government-to-government partnerships require mutual agreement on who should be present during Tribal consultation sessions, how often these meetings should occur, and who is responsible for implementation and follow-up. Here are some considerations:
  - Many Tribal leaders prefer the participation of school board members, the superintendent, and principals in these sessions.
  - Tribal education managers, directors, school Tribal liaisons, school counselors, and teachers working directly with students should attend at appropriate times to have a voice and stay informed.
  - At the statewide level, the Superintendent of Public Instruction committed to an annual meeting with Tribal leaders and participates in the Centennial Accord.
- Establish clear and respectful protocols and expectations to outline how Tribes and school districts will communicate, make decisions, set timelines, and resolve conflicts.
  - Tribal Liaisons, along with Tribal education managers and directors employed by Tribes, are crucial in involving the right people.
  - Clarifying the point of contact for Tribes and schools helps avoid communication breakdowns and ensures information is widely disseminated.
  - The OSPI Office of Native Education can assist with statewide communication and connect with the appropriate individuals when matters are unclear.
- Provide regular Tribal consultation and cultural competency training to educators, administrators, and school boards to ensure they understand and respect tribal sovereignty, as well as the Tribe's diverse cultures, histories, and perspectives. When possible, conducting training in Tribal communities deepens relationships, knowledge, and mutual respect.
- Involving Tribal representatives in shared decision-making related to education policies is a practice to embrace. This input is invaluable in creating policies that are culturally relevant, respectful, and that foster a sense of belonging and positive identity for Native American students.
- Prioritize resource allocation for Tribal collaboration to ensure equitable distribution of resources to support Native education programs.
  - Adequate funding is necessary to implement culturally responsive and respectful curricula, support language and cultural revitalization efforts, and improve educational outcomes for Native students.
  - It is critical to support and allocate time for professional development opportunities that are immersed in the Tribal community and which are mandatory, not optional.
  - Many Tribes are willing to supplement or co-fund professional development and learning opportunities. This can be accomplished through paying for meals, providing speakers and trainers, or paying teachers during the summer to connect with Native students and learn about their Tribal histories.

Limitations: Additional Research and Evaluation Suggested

Due to our time limitations, there were critical aspects of the Native American educational opportunity gap that did not receive a deep dive. Although the following topics were brought forth, they deserve deeper attention for the next steps in research or evaluation.

Social Emotional Learning: We were unable to address Social Emotional Learning (SEL) progress and gaps. However, many people discussed educating the whole child. One Native principal emphasized the importance of understanding the skills Native students need to navigate the Western academic system without sacrificing their identity, culture, language, and confidence for future success, such as feeling a sense of belonging and deserving a strong future. Some progress has been made in revising SEL indicators and creating training curricula for teachers and educators to learn about historical trauma and other important factors. These training opportunities proved transformative, but funding ran out. Therefore, this research and work are critical to addressing the whole child and ensuring support to meet each child's comprehensive needs. When we asked about progress more broadly, SEL was not mentioned.

Cultivation of Native American Educators and Administrators: Recruiting, hiring, and retaining educators and administrators of color, including Native American peoples, is a goal of the EOGOAC recommendations. Our Native students and all students benefit learning with Native certificated paraeducators and teachers, counselors, psychologists and other specialized staff, principals, and superintendents. Foundational work has started with the “Native American Educator Cultivation Project” through a collaboration with ONE and OSPI’s Title II department. This project grew from a pilot legislative initiative. To continue to grow this work, OSPI focused federal ESSER funds to establish a staff position within ONE who founded an advisory committee, reached out to Tribal partners to listen, develop networks, and provide professional learning and resources with Native pre-service and in-service educators. There is more for us to learn from this initial project to develop systemic policy and practices to achieve the vision and goals of the EOGOAC committee in this area.

Postsecondary Education and Technical Education: There is a vital need for better organization at the postsecondary level in partnership with the K-12 system and Washington State. The OSPI Office of Native American Education provides a structure to oversee Native American education across public and STEC schools, reporting to the State. However, postsecondary schools operate fairly independently when it comes to serving Native American students. Many of these institutions have Tribal liaisons and Native American advisory boards, yet there is a lack of representation at the state level to promote unified efforts and Tribal consultation statewide. We encourage further evaluation on creating postsecondary structures that allow for statewide Tribal consultation in higher education, addressing state policies, practices, and legislation to transform universities, colleges, and technical programs.

Summary – Relationships! Relationships! Relationships!

In closing, we express our gratitude to our Tribal leaders, educators, legislators, and communities for prioritizing the educational needs of our Native children and for the Tribes' resources invested in their success. We also acknowledge that Washington state has made significant investments in Native education, often leading the country in legislation. Although we may be leading, there is a need to refine and deepen existing legislation, with a strong call to further advance the JMLSTI legislation.

The OSPI Office of Native American Education plays a crucial role in implementing legislation, providing training, and bridging relationships with Tribes and OSPI school systems. There is a growing need to deepen these connections between K-12 and postsecondary education and technical programs to support Native pathways for college and careers. Additionally, there is room for growth in building relationships at the community, grassroots level that includes every school; otherwise, our Native children will not be reached.

The educational opportunity gap remains prevalent and calls us to action—all actions require relationships, relationships, relationships! These relationships must be built and respectfully maintained, starting from the government-to-government level and extending to our Native families and our children in communities. Our children's voices then need to rise back up to these highest levels so that our shared decision-making in educational policy, legislation, programs, and resource allocations keeps their best interests at heart.

Appendix A
Sample of Synergistic Conversation Script

Note: *This sample script served as background for the study and as a general conversation starter. Participants largely guided the discussion by focusing on the sections they were most interested in or knowledgeable about. All interviews and gatherings began with introductions from both project team members and participants.*

This work is guided by the 2023–2025 Education Proviso from the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs. It builds on the powerful foundation laid by the *From Where the Sun Rises* report back in 2008—a report that named both the harm and the hope in the state's educational systems. That report was not an end, but a beginning.

We have been asked to look not only at what's been written in law or policy, but at how those words live—or don't—in classrooms, curriculum, school boards, Tribal partnerships, and government-to-government relationships. We're drawing from community wisdom and expertise, previously gathered data, and your lived experiences to understand what's working, what's missing, and what more is needed.
Unfortunately, we only have a minimal window—two months—to assess Nearly 18 years of critical work in Native education. Because of that, this phase of the project is focused on creating a preliminary report, due by June 30, 2025. That report will offer:

- Initial findings based on listening sessions, individual interviews, data review, and shared stories;
- Preliminary highlights of progress made in fulfilling the state's trust responsibilities.
- Actionable recommendations for future growth and deeper partnerships; and
- A foundation for a more comprehensive and sustained investigation moving forward.

The preliminary report and its findings will be shared with the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight
and Accountability Committee, the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Board of Education, the Legislative Education Committees, and distributed across Indian Country. Our hope is that your words and teachings will guide meaningful action and shed light on what needs further study and evaluation.

So, Qe'ciyéw'yew' (Thank you) for joining us in this conversation today. We have some guiding questions but welcome you to share what is most on your mind and heart.

If it's OK, I will record this Zoom so we can download the transcript for further review and analysis. We will not attach your names to any comments, unless we identify a quote that makes better sense to attach your name. If so, I will seek your permission before I do so. Lastly, we would like to add a section to the report thanking all the people who contributed to this report through interviews or listening sessions. Please let me know if you would prefer your name not to be added.

Looking Back, Looking Ahead: Progress Since 2008

- What has been the most impactful change you have seen in Native education, in your community or across the state, since the last 2008 report – *From Where the Sun Rises* report?
- In your opinion, which policies, programs, or legislation have resulted in the most impactful changes in Native Education—either positively or negatively? Please explain?
- What policies, programs, or legislation either needs to be refined or created to improve Native education? Please share your recommendations and rationale.

Government-to-Government: Relationship and Responsibility

In 2023, a new law—RCW 28A.345.070—required the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) to hold yearly regional meetings and invite Tribal Councils from federally recognized Tribes in those areas. The purpose is to strengthen government-to-government relationships and create space for meaningful dialogue between Tribal leaders and local school boards.

This builds on an earlier law—RCW 28A.300.108—which called for tribal consultation training through the Office of Native Education at OSPI.

- How would you describe the relationship between your Tribe(s) and school district(s)?
- What would you recommend for deepening relationships between the Tribes and school districts and regional schools?

John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial Curriculum

- In 1989, the John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial (JMLSTI) curriculum legislation was enacted, and since various improvements to this legislation.
- What are the major impacts of the JMLSTI legislation, curriculum and program?
- Where is the implementation of JMLSTI being done well?
- Are there school districts that are not meeting their obligations of this legislation? What could they be doing better?
- What are needs and recommendations?

Giving Voice to Our Identity: Language and Culture Education

- Looking back, what progress have you seen surrounding language and culture education and revitalization efforts in your schools?
- What recommendations do you have for professional development, training and/or recertification to strengthen credentialed language and/or culture teachers?

In wrapping up our listening session, is there anything else beyond the topics discussed today you wish to include in this evaluation?

Appendix B
Coding Structure and Codes

First Cycle: Structural and Descriptive Codes (Data File Organization)

1.Gov to Gov - Relationship and Responsibility
- Progress
- Current relationships (between tribes and school districts)
- Meaningful tribal consultation practices
- Gaps
- Recommendations
- Exemplars

2.Legislation & Policy (don't spend too much time in this area)
- Code each legislation
- Policies impacts
- Gaps
- Recommendations
- Exemplars

3.Native Student Identification
- Exemplars
- Key quotes

4.Language & Cultural Education
- Teachers
- Programmatic and Tribal Funding
- Capacity
- FPLC - First People's Learning Certification
  - Assessment
  - Certification Process
  - Course Codes

5.JML STI
- Progress
- Impacts
- Gaps
- Recommendations (training, curriculum, oversight)
- Exemplars

1. State Tribal Education Compact Schools (STEC)
   - Progress
   - Exemplars
   - Challenges
   - Recommendations
2. Other educational themes (interviews & listening sessions)
   - Preservice Teacher Education and Professional Development

Second Cycle: Inductive Thematic Analysis

The second cycle coding generated themes that were carried throughout the listening session within the various first cycle codes.

See Securing Our Futures Section at end of manuscript for a list of inductive themes.

Appendix C
John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State Timeline

July 13, 1973 – Meeting between Dr. Brouillet and a Group of Concerned Indian Leaders

- The need for Indian Education curriculum development with earmarked funds.

Harold Patterson, Associate Supervisor Indian Education, "A Documentary History of the Inception of the Washington State Native American Education Advisory Committee" (May 11, 1976, p.35)

May 1974 – Implementation Design for Effective Supervision of Indian Education in the State of Washington presented to Dr. Brouillet by Emmett S. Oliver, Supervisor of Indian Education and Harold L. Patterson, Assistant Supervisor of Indian Education

- Recommendation No. 4- Provide leadership in the development of appropriate Indian cultural and heritage curriculum materials, and encourage and promote their use in the common schools.

Discussion: There is presently a very great demand for authentic Indian materials suitable for curriculum use. There is a responsibility to make available to all students in the State of Washington an accurate, fair and comprehensive study of the American Indian experiences with and contributions to American life. SPI is the logical agency to lead this effort.

The availability of such materials, and the involvement of Indian people in its production and presentation will produce long-term dividends in the enrichment of all students and in the removal of prejudice and misunderstanding.

A small start has been made in this office, which has been very well received.Other agencies are also involved in producing materials, and the SPI can serve very effectively in disseminating such materials and in promoting and assisting school district utilization of them.

In "A Documentary History of the Inception of the Washington State Native American Education Advisory Committee" May 11, 1976, p.52

1989 - Centennial Accord between the Federally Recognized Indian Tribes in Washington State and the State of Washington

- The parties recognize that implementation of this Accord will require a comprehensive educational effort to promote understanding of the government-to-government relationship within their own governmental organizations and with the public.

1999 - Institutionalizing the Government-to-Government Relationship in Preparation for the New Millennium

The undersigned leaders of American Indian Nations and the State of Washington, being united in Leavenworth, WA on November 1, 2 and 3, 1999 in the spirit of understanding and mutual respect of the 1989 Centennial Accord and the government-to-government relationship established in that Accord, and desiring to strengthen our relationships and our cooperation on issues of mutual concern, commit to the following:

- Strengthening our commitment to government-to-government relationships and working to increase the understanding of tribes' legal and political status as governments.
- Continuing cooperation in the future by developing enduring channels of communication and institutionalizing government-to-government processes that will promote timely and effective resolution of issues of mutual concern.
- Developing a consultation process, protocols and action plans that will move us forward on the Centennial Accord's promise that, "The parties will continue to strive for complete institutionalization of the government-to-government relationship by seeking an accord among all the tribes and all elements of state government."
- Enhancing communication and coordination through the Governor's commitment to strengthen his Office of Indian Affairs and the member tribes' commitment to strengthen the Association of Washington Tribes.
- Encouraging the Washington Legislature to establish a structure to address issues of mutual concern to the state and tribes:
- Educating the citizens of our state, particularly the youth who are our future leaders, about tribal history, culture, treaty rights, contemporary tribal and state government institutions and relations and the contribution of Indian Nations to the State of Washington to move us forward on the Centennial Accord's promise that, "The parties recognize that implementation of this Accord will require a comprehensive educational effort to promote understanding of the government-to-government relationship within their own governmental organizations and with the public.";
- Working in collaboration to engender mutual understanding and respect and to fight discrimination and racial prejudice; and,
- Striving to coordinate and cooperate as we seek to enhance economic and infrastructure opportunities, protect natural resources and provide educational opportunities and social and community services that meet the needs of all our citizens.

2003 - Tribal Leaders Summit with Governor Gary Locke and OSPI Superintendent Terry Bergeson hosted by Quinault Indian Nation

2005 – HB1495 brought forward by Representative John McCoy (Tulalip) passes (RCW 2A.320.170)

NEW SECTION. Sec. 4 A new section is added to chapter 28A.320 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Each school district board of directors is encouraged to incorporate curricula about the history, culture, and government of the nearest federally recognized Indian tribe or tribes, so that students learn about the unique heritage and experience of their closest neighbors. School districts near Washington's borders are encouraged to include federally recognized Indian tribes whose traditional lands and territories included parts of Washington, but who now reside in Oregon, Idaho, and British Columbia. School districts and tribes are encouraged to work together to develop such curricula.

(2) As they conduct regularly scheduled reviews and revisions of their social studies and history curricula, school districts are encouraged to collaborate with any federally recognized Indian tribe within their district, and with neighboring Indian tribes, to incorporate expanded and improved curricular materials about Indian tribes, and to create programs of classroom and community cultural exchanges.

(3) School districts are encouraged to collaborate with the office of the superintendent of public instruction on curricular areas regarding tribal government and history that are statewide in nature, such as the concept of tribal sovereignty and the history of federal policy towards federally recognized Indian tribes. The program of Indian education within the office of the superintendent of public instruction is encouraged to help local school districts identify federally recognized Indian tribes whose reservations are in whole or in part within the boundaries of the district and/or those that are nearest to the school district.

2005 - Tribal History and Culture Bill Meeting hosted at Puyallup Tribal Health Authority/Spirit House

2006 - Memorandum of Agreement Between the Tribal Leader Congress on Education, Washington State School Directors Association, the State Board of Education, and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

The parties are entering into this Memorandum of Agreement for the purpose of enhancing the government-to-government relationship between participating tribes and the state agency parties on issues related to education in the areas of tribal history and culture, and to help further the legislature’s stated intent to enacting HB1495.

The Tribal Leader Congress on Education, by authority vested through their respective Tribal Governments as sovereign nations, the Washington State School Directors’ Association, the Washington State Board of Education and the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction agree in the spirit of mutual interest and good faith effort to the following duties and responsibilities.

September 2007 - HB1495 Sovereignty Curriculum Advisory Committee

Participants:

Sue Vanderburg	**Jamie Valadez**
David Iyall	**Gayle Pauley**
Denny Hurtado	**Leonard Forsman**
Shana Brown	**Joan Banker**
Elese Washines	**Sally Brownfield**
Jerry Price	**Dierk Meierbachtol**
Mystique Hurtado	

2008 – *From Where the Sun Rises* Report presented to state legislators

2008 – Pilot of curriculum units

2008 – First curriculum training hosted at The Evergreen State College

2011 – First Training of Trainers hosted at Tulalip Tribes
Basic trainings supported throughout the state.

2012 – Pilot School Report published.
https://core-time-digital.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/STIPilotSchoolsFinalRpt2012.pdf

2012 – Word Press Website published.

2015 SSB 5433 passed.
Section 2. (a) Beginning the effective date of this section (July 1, 2015), when a school district board of directors reviews or adopts its social studies curriculum, it shall incorporate curricula about the history, culture, and government of the nearest federally recognized Indian tribe or tribes, so that students learn about the unique heritage and experience of their closest neighbors.
(b) School districts shall meet the requirements of this section by using curriculum developed and made available free of charge by the office of the superintendent of public instruction and may modify that curriculum in order to incorporate elements that have a regionally specific focus or to incorporate the curriculum into existing curricular materials.

Section 3. School districts shall collaborate with the office of the superintendent of public instruction on curricular areas regarding tribal government and history that are statewide in nature, such as the concept of tribal sovereignty and the history of federal policy towards federally recognized Indian tribes. The program of Indian education within the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall help local school districts identify federally recognized Indian tribes whose reservations are in whole or in part within the boundaries of the district and/or those that are nearest to the school district.

2015 SSB5433 codified as RCW 28A.320.170.
2015 Since Time Immemorial Curriculum moved from Word Press to OSPI server.
2015 Early Learning Tribal Sovereignty Curriculum developed.
The early learning curriculum complements the “Since Time Immemorial” Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State Curriculum developed through the Office of Native Education/OSPI. It is the culmination of a shared vision of the Tribal Nations, Office of Native Education/OSPI, First Peoples First Steps Alliance, Thrive Washington, the Department of Early Learning, and Puget Sound ESD’s Native American Programs (Rebecca Kreth, former director of the PSESD Native American Early Learning Project).

2016 4SHB 1541 passed.
Implement strategies to close the educational opportunity gap based on the recommendations of the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC), including best practices to implement the tribal history and culture curriculum.
2017 Primary Lessons developed.
2017 UW Native American Education Certificate pilot developed.

2018 ONE/OSPI position to support curriculum implementation budgeted by legislature.
2018 Since Time Immemorial curriculum lessons aligned to state Environmental and Sustainability Education and Social Emotional Learning Standards.
2018 SB 5028 passed.
Requires teacher preparation programs to integrate Native American curriculum developed by Tribes and ONE/OSPI be integrated into existing Pacific Northwest history and government requirements. Committee formed by PESB to implement.
2018 Tribal Curriculum Writers group formed.
2018 Legislation was passed requiring a 0.5 stand-alone course for each high school student, that offer students opportunity to learn federal, state, tribal, and local government organization and procedures.

2019 NMAI Native Knowledge 360 Inquiries integrated as part of Since Time Immemorial curriculum.
2019 Criteria to monitor implementation of Since Time Immemorial curriculum added as Section 19.B to OSPI federal Comprehensive Programs Review (CPR) for districts required to consult with Tribes per the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
2019 *Since Time Immemorial* curriculum resources translated into Spanish language.
2020 In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures, the Since Time Immemorial curriculum trainings and webinars hosted on-line. Additional sections added to the website including "Ready to Go" lessons, "Teacher & Librarian Implementation Videos," Northwest Native American Reading Curriculum, and Native American Stories and Science Connections.
2020 Implementation of Since Time Immemorial curriculum identified as district COVID-19 support strategy.
2021 Since Time Immemorial curriculum Tribal Grants available as an ONE/OSPI developed ESSER project.
2022 Washington State History Middle School Unit 1C: Medicine Creek Treaty of 1854 developed by the Nisqually Indian Tribe added to the Since Time Immemorial curriculum.
2024 HB 1879 passed naming the curriculum in honor of John McCoy (lulilaš).

Appendix D
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation: Tribal Consultation Guide

Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation – ESSA Tribal Consultation Guide

2023

Table of Contents

Introduction

The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation strives to empower students and families to persevere through the historical trauma and past failed Indian education policies to new and much improved policies that inspire thriving education systems and environments conducive to student academic excellence. The Colville Tribes values the partnership with Public School Districts that serve tribal member students and insists that we continue to work cohesively and collaboratively to re indigenize education by redefining what an educated Colville tribal student is. We strive to transform Indian Education statistics to reflect our tribal students' true capabilities and potential and ultimately advancing to self-determination and tribal sovereignty.

Tribal consultation is a process for listening to Colville tribal perspectives on matters affecting our children's education, specifically, the best uses of federal funds to address challenges and opportunities. The process recognizes the role of tribal governments as sovereigns in directing the education of Indigenous students and the teamwork needed between schools and tribal communities to facilitate our student's academic progress. The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation is a sovereign nation with its own government system, heritage languages, cultural practices, and education needs. Tribes have government-to-government relationships with federal, state and local entities.

Importance of Tribal Consultation

Indigenous youth need every critical resource available to close achievement gaps. The Colville Tribes is a vital partner for Public School Districts and strives to provide important information and resources that can help schools and families succeed. By re-engaging the Colville Tribes, the Public Schools are in a unique position to place emphasis on understanding the beliefs, attitudes and educational priorities tribal governments have for their youth. Partnering and soliciting feedback from those committed to lifelong support of their citizens can allow schools to be strategic in meeting the needs of tribal member/affiliated students.

Tribal consultation is a necessary approach for advancing equity for Indigenous students. The Colville Tribes wants to form a more viable partnership with OSPI and Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and other partners to share responsibility and accountability in creating educational experiences focused on positive outcomes that value the beliefs, traditions, languages, and cultures of Colville tribal students.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Tribal Consultation

OSPI Bulletin No. 030-22

School districts that access Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 federal funds as reauthorized under Section 8538 of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that meet the ESSA tribal consultation criteria are required to ensure timely, meaningful, and ongoing consultation on issues affecting American Indian and Alaskan Native students. Those school districts are also required to consult with appropriate officials from Indian tribes or tribal organizations prior to the school district's submission of a required plan or application. Such consultation shall be done in a manner and in such a time that provides the opportunity for officials from Indian tribes or tribal organizations to contribute to such a plan meaningfully and substantively.

ESSA Tribal Consultation Criteria

School districts who are required to participate in ESSA Tribal Consultation meet the following criteria:

1. 50% or more of their total student enrollment comprises students identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native for given fiscal year, and/or

2. They receive a grant under Title VI, Part A, subpart 1, that exceeded $40,000 for given fiscal year.

The Washington State Public School Districts located on or near the Colville Reservation that are required to consult are as follows:

1. Grand Coulee Dam
2. Inchelium School District
3. Keller School District
4. Nespelem School District '
5. Okanogan School District
6. Omak School District

Each affected school district is required to maintain in the district's records AND upload with the General Assurances in Education Grant Management System (EGMS) the "Affirmation of Consultation with Tribal Representatives" form.
Appropriate signatures must be secured on the form, assuring the required consultation has occurred. Federal Title funds will not be released to districts until the OSPI Tribal Consultation Assurance form is verified by the Office of Native Education and/or documentation of attempts to consult, including scheduled future consultation meetings, is provided to the Office of Native Education.

Affirmation of Consultation with Tribal Representatives forms must be completed and uploaded with the General Assurances in EGMS by a date specified by OSPI in September of each year.

District and Tribal Relationship Training

With the recent passage of Senate Bill 5252, training designed to support district-tribal relationships and strengthen tribal consultation processes will be available and required for school district leaders designated to engage in ESSA tribal consultation. Tribal consultation training sessions will be announced and offered by the Office of Native Education starting in 2023. The Colville Tribes will submit an annual request to host a training session for all school districts required to consult.

Consultation Data and Covered Programs

Affected LEAs are required to consult with Tribes on the ESSA programs listed below. Each federally funded program administered through the United States Department of Education directly impacts Native students.

- Title I, Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged
    - o Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by State and Local Educational Agencies
    - o Part C: Education of Migratory Children o Part D: Prevention of Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or at risk
- Title II, Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction
- Title III, Part A: English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act

Title IV, 21st Century Schools

- Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants
- Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers

· Title V: Part B, Subpart 2: Rural and low income School Programs

· Title VI: Part A, Subpart 1, Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaskan Native Education

· Title I Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by State and Local Educational Agencies supports programs that provide all children with opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and meet challenging state standards. Assistance for LEAs and schools is determined by census poverty estimates and the cost of education in each state. Examples of eligible uses of funds include support for extra instruction in reading and mathematics, as well as special preschool, after-school, and summer programs to extend and reinforce the regular school curriculum.

· Title I Part C: Education of Migratory Children provides financial assistance to state education agencies (SEAs) to establish and improve programs of education for children of migratory farmworkers and fishers. Federal funds are allocated by formula to SEAs based on each state's per pupil expenditure for education and counts of eligible migratory children, age 3 through 21, residing within the state. State migratory education program (MEP) grantees and local/regional MEP sub-grantees carry out activities such as identifying and recruiting migratory children, providing instructional and support services that help bolster and sustain the educational progress of migratory children, and collaborating with other organizations and programs that serve migratory children (e.g., Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, the College Assistance Migrant Program, or the High School Equivalency Program).

· Title I Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk improves educational services for children and youth in local, tribal, and state institutions who are neglected, or delinquent children and youth. Funds may pay for educational services, as well as prevention and rehabilitative services for students who are involved in the justice system or are at risk of dropping out of high school.

· Title II Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction supplements activities that strengthen the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other school leaders. Examples of local-level activities include recruiting and retaining effective teachers and principals and providing professional development for teachers and principals. In exchange for receiving funds, agencies are held accountable to the public for improvements in academic achievement.

· Title III Part A: English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act helps children whose first language is not English attain English language proficiency and meet state academic standards. Eligible activities are aimed at improving outcomes for English learners, such as those that support instruction, family engagement, and professional development.

· Title IV Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants help provide all students with access to a well rounded education, improve conditions for student learning and the use of technology to promote the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students.

· Title IV Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers support the establishment of community learning centers during out-of-school time hours.

· Title V Part B, Subpart 2: Rural and Low-Income School (RLIS) Program addresses the unique needs of rural school districts that frequently lack the personnel and resources needed to compete effectively for federal discretionary grants and who receive formula grant allocations in amounts too small to be effective in meeting their intended purposes. Funding is provided to districts with small populations in lower-density areas, which is designated by the National Center for Education Statistics.

· Title VI Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native Education, Part A, Subpart 1: Formula Grants to Local Educational Agencies is designed to address the unique cultural, language, and educational needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students, including preschool children, and ensure that all students meet the challenging state academic standards. Eligible programs include culturally related activities that support the program described in the application submitted by the LEA, early childhood programs that emphasize school

readiness, and integrated educational services in combination with other programs that meet the needs of American Indian children and their families.

Title VI Name Changes Title VI, Part A, subpart 1, Indian Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native Education was identified as Title VII prior to 2017. Title VII now refers to Impact Aid funding. Although Impact Aid funding is not required by law to be addressed through tribal consultation, consultation participants may request information as this funding affects American Indian student opportunities and outcomes.

Additional Data Requested by Tribes

Student Demographic Data: Enrolled Colville Members, Descendants, Members of Other Tribes, Total Students, Tribal Students on IEP, and Number of Students that signed YDP Consent Form for grades Pre-School to Twelfth Grade.

Assessment (Smarter Balanced Assessments & Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science): Of total students, percentage earned a score high enough to meet the state standard for their grade level for ELA, Math and Science broken down by following: All students, Ethnicity, American Indian/Alaskan, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Two or more races, and White.

Graduation: Of all students, percentage graduated by Graduating, Percent Continuing, and Percent Dropout broken down by following: All students, Ethnicity, American Indian/Alaskan, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Two or more races, and White.

Attendance: Of all students, percentage had fewer than 2 absences per month including percentage and number broken down by the following: All students, Ethnicity, American Indian/Alaskan, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Two or more races, and White.

Dual Credit: Of all students, percentage completed dual credit course including number and percentage broken down by following: All students, Ethnicity, American Indian/Alaskan, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Two or more races, and White.

Student Discipline: Of all students, number and percentage received short-term suspension, long-term suspension,

emergency expulsion for discipline related incident broken down by the following: All students, Ethnicity, American Indian/Alaskan, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Two or more races, and White.

Co-curricular Program Enrollment (Tribal): Number of American Indian students (Enrolled CCT Members, CCT Descendants, Members of other Tribes) who are recognized in these programs.

Gifted & Talented: Students identified as Gifted/Talented under this current school year in categories listed: All categories, Academics Aptitude, Visual & Performing Arts, Creativity (Divergent Thinking) Leadership, Intellectual Aptitude.

ASB/Leadership: Names of students in ASB/Student Body Council with Tribal Affiliation. (Enrolled CCT Members, CCT Descendants. Other Tribes, Other Descendants)

Student Awards: Number of awards received by Tribally Affiliated students. (Enrolled CCT Members, CCT Descendants. Other Tribes, Other Descendants)

Athletics Fall/Winter/Spring: Total number of student participation in sports programs. Boys, Girls and total # of Native American (Enrolled CCT Members, CCT Descendants. Other Tribes, Other Descendants)

CTE Courses: Identify course name, level and number of students in each course.

Teachers: Number and percentage of all teachers listed as the following: American Indian/Alaskan, Asian, Black/African American, and White.

HIB (Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying): How is the school addressing school bullying issues? List curriculum & description, lead counselor/teacher implementing and grade levels.

Salish Language: Teacher name and grade level taught for each language dialect - nxaʔamxcín̓ (Moses-Columbia), nselxcin (Okanagan), titoqatimt (Nez Perce)

of Tribal Language Courses available for students to take for high school and college credit.

American Indian Student Interventions: List of programs, interventions, or services provided specifically for American Indian students.

Engagement: List of mechanisms in place for engaging Tribes, tribal community members, parents and family members.

COVID-19: Information on how the School is dealing with Covid-19 in altering nutrition schedules, instruction, services, resources, and distance learning.

Curriculum Resources: List of resources School District is dedicating to assisting the Colville Tribes in developing tribal history, culture and governance curriculum to implement in school.

College in the Classroom: List of College in the Classroom opportunities available for American Indian students.

Racism Resources: Explanation of what school is doing to combat racism among students and staff.

Youth Development Program: Explanation of how school is utilizing the Colville Tribes's Youth Development Program Resources and staff to improve student success.

Safe Reporting: Is there a system in place for safe reporting? A place for children to talk without parents in neglect/child abuse instances?

Career Counselors: How often are students meeting with career counselors to make post graduate college or career plans?

All data requests will be captured by utilizing the ESSA-CCT Tribal Consultation Form , attached for review.

Consultation Timeline

Although School Districts are required to engage in Tribal Consultation to get their Affirmations signed and submitted by September of each year, it is critically important to note that frequent Tribal Consultation is an ongoing process

throughout the entire year as needed for continued collaboration and periodic reviews. The Colville Business Council reserves

the right to outreach to School Board and/or School Officials as needed to request information or provide feedback on any given matter. School Districts are also welcome to communicate with the Colville Business Council by submitting an Agenda Request for the CBC – Employment & Education Committee. LEAs must consult with Tribes PRIOR to submitting their final grant plans and applications. February through April is a good timeframe for initiating consultation. LEAs must consult with Tribes PRIOR to submitting their final grant plans and applications. February through April is a good timeframe for initiating consultation. School Districts are encouraged to contact the Colville Tribes's Youth Development Program Manager in March to request information on scheduling Tribal Consultation between the Colville Business Council/Education Staff and School Districts School Board/School Officials. School Districts should also request the "ESSA-CCT Tribal Consultation Form" via e-mail or by downloading on CCT Website. The School District will complete the Form and schedule a meeting with the CCT Education staff including Employment & Education Director and Youth Development Program Manager. School Districts are encouraged to include relevant school Personnel in this initial meeting. LEA participants may include the Superintendent, federal programs director, Indian Education Director/Coordinator, parent advisory committee members, teaching and learning directors, and English Learner coordinators and any other relevant staff. The Colville Tribes' Education Staff will provide initial feedback in "Tribes Recommendations" in the ESSA- CCT Tribal Consultation Form. Once this is complete the School District will submit completed form inclusive of the Colville Tribes' Education Staff recommendations by the first Friday in May to E&E Director and YDP Manager e-mail provided. School Districts will be notified of the Tribal Consultation Summit by the first Friday in April. In April, the Colville Tribes Education Staff will distribute an online and paper survey for students, families, teachers, staff, and community to gather and document input relevant to their experience with the school as well as recommendations on best practices to improve student school experiences.

In May the Colville Business Council and Education Staff will meet with all School District School Boards and School Officials for the Colville Tribal Education Consultation Summit at the Colville Tribes Lucy Covington Government Building at which time the Tribes will present annual education priorities, review the ESSA – CCT Tribal Consultation

Form and make edits and/or additions, and hear School District Priorities and important information. There will be 30 Minutes allocated in the Colville Tribal Education Consultation Summit for Public Comment.

After the Tribal Consultation Summit, School Districts will work with the CCT Education Staff to submit an Agenda Request and Recommendation Sheet for the Colville Business Council Employment & Education Committee. This is the formal process for CBC to pass an official Resolution recognizing that the School District has met the Tribal Consultation requirement by law. Once CBC passes the Resolution, the CBC Chairman will sign the Affirmation and the CCT Education Staff will forward it to School Superintendent via e-mail. The completed ESSA- Tribal Consultation Forms will be made available on the Youth Development Prorgram Website for public review and comment.

Meaningful Consultation

The law states tribal consultation must be meaningful. Effective and Successful Tribal Consultation isn't just an act of getting an Affirmation signed, it is a process for the School District and Tribes to work together to improve all students educational experience within the Public School system. The School Districts will demonstrate how funding levels and/or services changed as a result of the Tribes's recommendations and feedback. The Colville Tribes will only sign Affirmations that constitute Meaningful and Timely Consultation.

Summary

Tribal consultation is an important investment in the future of our students and is a legal requirement. Tribal consultation ensures that tribal community members contribute to decision-making about the best use of federal funds to meet the educational needs of their students. When LEAs collaborate with tribal leaders and TED staff, they are benefitting from expertise about their students. Consultation reviews the ESSA-covered programs which include Title I through Title VI grants. Affected LEAs must consult with tribes in their service area, a 50-mile radius between the school district and tribal land boundaries. For the Tribes to provide a meaningful contribution, timely notice of consultation and supporting data from schools is necessary so staff and tribal leaders may work together to develop questions and identify information that will support LEAs in meeting student needs. LEAs must request tribal input prior to submitting their grant application. February through March is an optimum time frame for LEAs to initiate consultation. Consultation ideally occurs year-round to monitor progress and refine plans. Successful consultation involves an understanding of the requirements and the building of collaborative relationships through mutual respect of each partner's role. Participants should listen to hear and respond to support our American Indian students.

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