

American Indian College fund's Ihduwiyayapi advancing Indigenous early childhood education ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

American Indian College Fund's Ihduwiyayapi Advancing Indigenous Early Childhood Education (IECE) Builds Community of Practice for Indigenous Educators

Program supports early childhood education success through Indigenous-based approaches.

August 23, 2022, Denver, Colo.— Children are sacred and early childhood education is critical to the next generation of Indigenous leaders. Early childhood education is shown to promote education access, persistence, completion, and career readiness. Four grants totaling \$6.25 million to the American Indian College Fund helped launch the Ihduwiyayapi Advancing Indigenous Early Childhood Education (IECE) program to support IECE programs at tribal colleges and universities (TCUs). The program provides opportunities for 11 TCUs to build their capacity building through professional development with access to a Community of Practice and mentorship, as well as program development through Indigenous pedagogy, parent and family empowerment, and program alignment and articulation. TCU partners will enhance their services to students, training the next generation of Indigenous early childhood educators and strengthening Native communities and families.

Funders include the Bezos Family Foundation (\$5.3 million), the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (\$600,000), the Heising-Simons Foundation (\$350,000), and American Family Insurance (\$30,000). The program builds upon past College Fund early childhood education programs which served more than 5,000 children, 3,900 families, and 2,700 teachers at TCUs across Indian Country.

Ihduwiyayapi is the Dakota translation for "they are getting ready." Its meaning conveys that the program participants are preparing themselves and their TCU programs for what will come next as they work to create a foundation for the advancement of Early Childhood Education.

The 11 TCUs that have joined the Ihduwiyayapi program will:

- strengthen the early childhood education pathway through degree program creation and enhancement, support internship practicums, and increase TCUs' ability to support student recruitment, transfers, retention, and college completion.
- empower parents and families to advocate for their children and themselves as they interact with and navigate education institutions, and to develop or enhance parent and family involvement in the design of IECE programs.
- participate in storytelling to engage diverse audiences and connect participants to a movement to strengthen the Native teacher pathway, focus the narrative about Native communities on place-based expertise, and inspire the next generation of Native educators.
- establish an early educator community of practice rooted in community knowledge to create and strengthen TCUs' early childhood education pathways.

TCU partners' projects include:

- Blackfeet Community College (BCC), Browning, Montana— The Pommotsiisinni -Transfer of Knowledge Program will develop quality early educators who will embrace niitsiitupyo'maitukssin "Pikani ways of knowing," providing access to diverse and dynamic learning opportunities for early education careers. The project embeds Piikani values and standards into the BCC's early childhood education program and courses.
- College of Menominee Nation (CMN), Green Bay, Wisconsin—CMN's Indigenous Education House: Building Our Foundation to Meet the Needs of the Community program is community-centered, multi-faceted, and builds on CMN's capacity. The program strengthens existing relationships within the community to identify the professional development, teacher training, credentialing, and licensing needs of its local educational institutions. It will also enhance institutional capacity and program/credential offerings at CMN and provide training and professional development to faculty, current students, alumni, and teachers who work with Menominee Nation's young children.
- Diné College, Tsaile, Arizona—Diné College will establish relationships to build its community of practice with the College Fund and

other TCUs.

- Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College (FDLTCC), Cloquet, Minnesota—The Braiding the Pathway: Intentionally Designed Alignment program will provide space and guidance to align Child Development program content and resources with the Anishinaabe cultural standards that are the foundation of FDLTCC’s accreditation. The TCU will provide support and credit for prior learning opportunities for its students. The second year of the program will advance the capacity for restorative cultural teaching for FDLTCC and the community. The TCU is seeking to seamlessly intertwine its foundational culture into developmental and teaching knowledge.
- Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College (LCOOC), Hayward, Wisconsin—The Nenda-gikenimaajig (The Ones Who Seek Knowledge) Project will increase the capacity of early childhood educators and expand teacher licensure and employment pathways. The program will be steeped in Anishinaabe language, teachings, worldviews, and trauma-informed care to preserve Ojibwe families’ cultural identities.
- Little Priest Tribal College (LPTC), Winnebago, Nebraska—The Building the Capacity of Early Childhood Education through Innovative Indigenous Approaches program will provide Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska members the pathways to become teachers and caregivers with an associate degree. The knowledge and skill acquired at LPTC will assure professionalism as they work with children on the Winnebago Reservation in their education careers. Year two of the program, titled Building and Sustaining an Education Program from the HoChunk Cultural Perspective and Worldview program, will build capacity with Indigenous input and provide paths to train quality and skilled teachers to serve the Winnebago Reservation’s education system.
- Navajo Technical University (NTU), Crownpoint, New Mexico—Diné-A: shiwi Planting Ancestral Seeds of Knowledge program will use Indigenous ancestral knowledge and teachings to train faculty and staff to promote the social and emotional development of Diné, A:shiwi, other Indigenous children, children residing across the Southwest region, and their families.
- Northwest Indian College (NWIC), Bellingham, Washington—The Supporting the Oksale: Providing Professional Development to Teachers that Increases their Understanding of Indigenous Early Childhood Education Pedagogy and Practice program will support prospective and current associate of applied science transfer students in early childhood education (AAS-T ECE). NWIC provided virtual information sessions about its degree program and graduation coaching to students who were slated to graduate in the spring of 2022. The program will also support AAS-T ECE faculty with professional development and learning opportunities.
- Sitting Bull College (SBC), Ft. Yates, North Dakota—The Wóuŋspe Iwóuŋlakapi (Lessons/Learning/Knowledge we are talking/discussing) program will survey parents and families in the Standing Rock Reservation community to define engagement and empowerment with education to determine community engagement for SBC’s program. SBC will also collect data on the best communication format with community members for ongoing meetings to establish community involvement to define their cultural understandings and relationship to education to help the TCU further develop its programs and program structure.
- Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI), Albuquerque, New Mexico—The Collective Voices: Re-envisioning Indigenous Early Childhood Teacher Preparation program will consult community and Indigenous thought leaders to improve SIPI’s Early Childhood Education (ECE) program. The result will be a more responsive program of study (POS) for Indigenous ECE teachers and communities. SIPI will survey stakeholders and revise ECE course curriculum to include Critical Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy (CCSRP). The TCU will also examine capacity-building needs for SIPI’s ECE program to create lasting change and community responsiveness.
- Stone Child College (SCC), Box Elder, Montana—The Tahkaki Kiskinwahamakew (Great Teacher) Project will increase the capacity for SCC’s Early Childhood Education program to embed elements of Indigenous learning, place-based curriculum, and the cultures, histories, and languages relevant to the Chippewa Cree. These efforts will enhance the curricula using community and family outreach, professional development, and the multiple perspectives shared by TCU partners and Community of Practice; and will increase the ability for TCU associate level ECE graduates to transfer seamlessly and graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education from The University of Montana Western through formal articulation agreements and collaborative professional development. Year two of the program, The Nototahkok Ketahahyahk (Listen to Your Elders) Project will increase SCC’s capacity to offer and deliver culturally grounded early childhood education associate and bachelor’s degrees, and to support other TCUs to enhance their early childhood programs. Year two of the program, The Nototahkok Ketahahyahk (Listen to Your Elders) Project, will increase the college’s capacity to offer and deliver culturally grounded early childhood education associate and bachelor’s degrees, and to support other TCUs to enhance their early childhood programs.

As part of the program’s goal to build a community of practice, the College Fund hosted the Ihduwiyayapi Omniciye: Raising Voices and Communities through Indigenous Early Childhood Education convening June 15-16, 2022, in Denver, Colorado. This was the first in-person IECE convening since the pandemic, with participants from eight TCUs in attendance. Participants learned about other institutions’ proposals and programs; shared knowledge about Indigenous pedagogy and experiences; discussed ways to collaborate and expand their teaching practices to create Indigenous teachers; and built professional relationships. The goal of the convening was for participants to explore strength-based approaches that support cultural foundations in TCU’s IECE programs to serve Indigenous students, families, and communities. As a result, TCU partners are establishing an IECE system that promotes positive self-esteem for students leading to increased well-being and academic success.

During the program faculty will continue to meet in the Ihduwiyayapi community of practice to share program outcomes, best practices, Indigenous pedagogy, and community-based learning. TCU program participants will also regularly share their programs’ impacts through storytelling on the College Fund’s blog and other media channels.

About the American Indian College Fund—The American Indian College Fund has been the nation’s largest charity supporting Native higher education for 32 years. The College Fund believes “Education is the answer” and provided \$15.5 million in scholarships and other direct student support to American Indian students in 2020-21. Since its founding in 1989 the College Fund has provided more than \$259

million in scholarships, programmatic and community support. The College Fund also supports a variety of academic and support programs at the nation's 35 accredited tribal colleges and universities, which are located on or near Indian reservations, ensuring students have the tools to graduate and succeed in their careers. The College Fund consistently receives top ratings from independent charity evaluators and is one of the nation's top 100 charities named to the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance. For more information about the American Indian College Fund, please visit www.collegefund.org [3].

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