



# **RESURGENCE**

## **RESTRUCTURING URBAN AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION**

By: Joe Hobot, Ed.D.



**NOV 2017**  
EXECUTIVE  
SUMMARY

**NATIONAL URBAN  
INDIAN FAMILY  
COALITION**



## ABOUT THE NATIONAL URBAN INDIAN FAMILY

### NUIFC Mission:

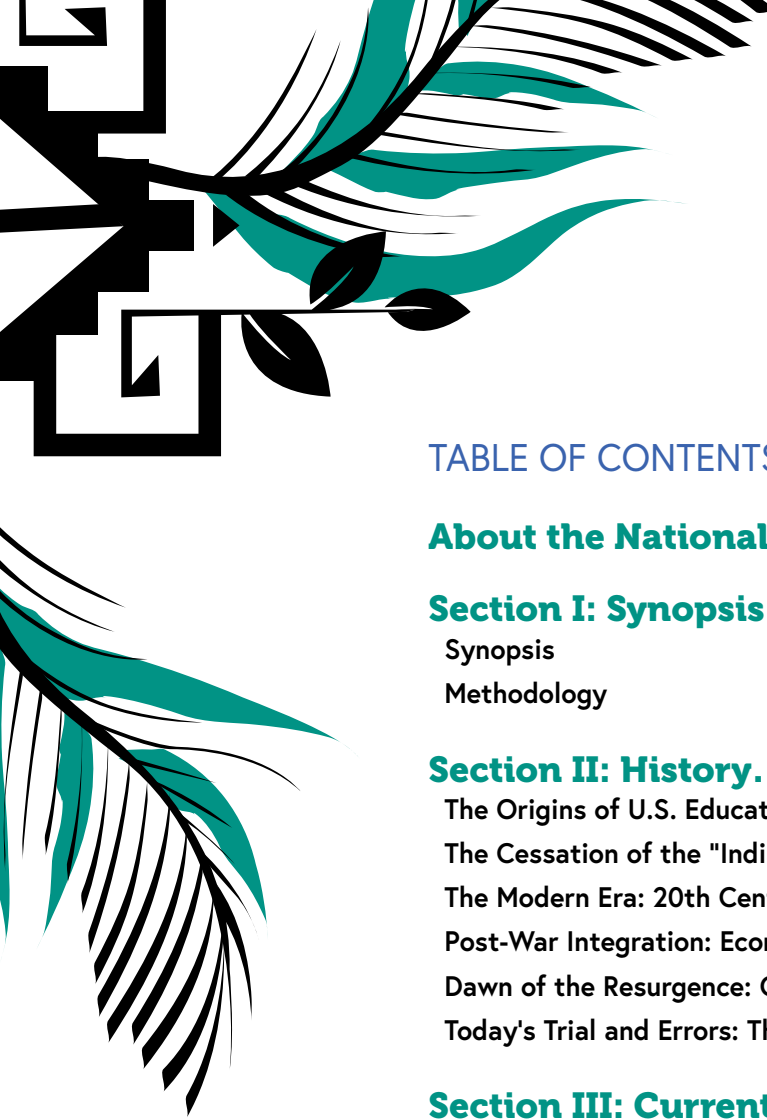
NUIFC elevates a national voice and sustains Indigenous values and culture through a strong network of urban Indian organization.

### Our goals:

- ◆ **To build a movement that promotes advocacy and mobilizes systems to integrate Urban Indian issues in policy discussions and implementation**
- ◆ **To build positive and mutually supportive relationships with tribal governments and other institutions for the betterment of our children and families who live in urban communities**
- ◆ **To create, through dialogue, a shared understanding of the barriers, issues, and unique opportunities facing urban Indian families**
- ◆ **To collectively develop and share strategies to address the issues facing AI/AN families in cities**
- ◆ **To sustain indigenous values and culture within urban communities**

The National Urban Indian Family Coalition (NUIFC) advocates for American Indian families living in urban areas by creating partnerships with tribes, as well as other American Indian organizations, and by conducting research to better understand the barriers, issues, and opportunities facing urban American Indian families. Program models, policy critiques, and best practices will be developed through sharing data with participating organizations. We envision building a network of urban American Indian Organizations to strengthen urban American Indian families by reinforcing cultural identity, education, and healthy families while respectfully working to harmoniously bridge the gap between tribal government's and other institutions. Ultimately, we seek to strengthen the voices of urban American Indian peoples and their access to resources. By including NUIFC members in these critical conversations and including Urban Indian issues in national dialogue regarding Native America, we ensure that the concerns of our families are addressed and that Urban issues are included in national policy work.

One of the primary intentions of creating the NUIFC is to ensure access to traditionally excluded organizations and families, and to focus attention on the needs of urban Indians. The National Urban Indian Family Coalition is dedicated to remaining an access point for the exchange of ideas and dialogue regarding Urban Indian America.



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## Section I: Synopsis & Methodology

### Synopsis:

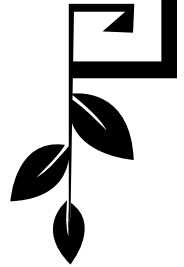
As a result of chronic and systemic failures of local public schools regarding the education of American Indian students, a handful of urban American Indian communities felt compelled to intervene on behalf of their youth. As a result, these communities set about constructing new programming that was not only inclusive of their indigenous culture – it was the basis by which all academic activities would be centered on. *Resurgence: Restructuring Urban American Indian Education* is an examination of the of the history that created the context and need for these programs, the processes that effected their creation, the nature by which these programs operate and are considered alternative, and the methodologies by which American Indian culture has been incorporated into them. Through this examination, it is the hope that the featured sites will can receive additional support to deepen the impact of their work and begin to remedy long-standing and persistent academic disparities affecting urban American Indian communities. Additionally, it is the hope that this work will inspire other urban indigenous populations to follow suit and reassert dominion over their local public school system, while creating alternative programming to support their own American Indian students.

This Executive Summary will provide a brief recounting of the full work put forward in the main text *Resurgence: Restructuring Urban American Indian Education*. To this end, issues detailed in the larger work regarding the historical relationship between the U.S. public education system and the Native American community have been included as a means of providing context, as well as to demonstrate

an intrinsic failure of the system itself as being responsible for generating its current academic disparities. Additionally, recent scholastic data was also included (as yielded by the six cities where the featured alternative programming are in operation) to further demonstrate that the systemic failings of public schools are not receding.

From there, the Executive Summary features the efforts currently being pursued on behalf of Native American students within six urban locations – Albuquerque, New Mexico; Denver, Colorado; Los Angeles, California; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Portland, Oregon; and Seattle, Washington. Each level of development of alternative programming within these urban areas was categorized within the main work – detailing a pattern of civic engagement established by the local Native American community, as well as the utilization of recurring educational strategies that have formed the basis of an attempt to define the emergence of an indigenous pedagogy.

We then conclude with a more in-depth expression of the five principle recommendations discussed within *Resurgence: Restructuring Urban American Indian Education*. Ultimately it is the hope of this entire project to empower the Native American communities throughout the United States to assert its control over public schools, and rectify the systemic problems for their youth on behalf of a system that has thus far been incapable of accomplishing.



### Methodology:

Much of the information for this project was accumulated through three principle means: a review of previous literature germane to the topic, research to collect current data, and site visits complete with interviews with administrators, faculty, and students. Historical context was provided utilizing a synthesized review of publications written by several noted historians regarding the subject area. Additionally, current data was gathered from mainstream information sources (including material published directly by the local school themselves) in order to provide an opportunity to assess the

efficacy of the public school system in its current iteration specifically with regards to American Indian students. Finally, site visits were conducted to each of the seven featured programs – whereby extensive interviews generated insights and further details about the lived experiences of those who were responsible for creating these remarkable alternative educational services. Through the utilization of these three research techniques, a rich overview was crafted to provide a detailed examination of the creative journeys undertaken at each of featured.

*Author's Note: As a result of very recent modifications put into place by the "Every Student Succeeds Act" (ESSA), federal funding for American Indian education has had its traditional moniker of Title VII Funding switched to the new name of Title VI Funding. This change occurred during the construction of this project and as a result, throughout this work, the federal funding retains its original Title VII name – although it is in direct reference to what is now to be called "Title VI Funding".*

## Section II: History

### The Origins of U.S. Education System <sup>1</sup>

In order to properly appraise the strategies currently being employed by the alternative sites selected for this work, it is incumbent upon us to become familiar with the historical context out of which the needs for these very programs arose. This history, centered upon the relationship between the ever-evolving formalized education systems of the United States and the sovereignty of the Native American people has been wrought with violence, trauma, injustice, reform, and finally, innovation. To fully comprehend why these alternative programs are in operation within the 21st Century, we must return back to the origins of schooling itself within the 18th Century and follow its path forward from there. Once traversed, we will be better able to understand the impetus for a conscious transition away from mainstream efforts towards methodologies that are, for all intents and purposes, born of traditional practices predating the United States itself.

By the middle of the 19th Century, the country found itself being thrust forward by historical forces they were unprepared for, heading towards a crossroads to determine just what this country was. Many began to openly question the ability of this relatively young nation to sustain itself and prosper, without some concerted effort to stabilize and enforce a coda around an accepted national identity - that which they believed to be the requisite characteristics to be exhibited by its citizens. The most practical environment to address these needs and to push back against the escalating fears regarding the national identity was through the nation's classrooms. In essence, it would be through the public schools where being an American citizen could be defined and reinforced, and done so through the education of the nation's youth.

Within this context arose a new focus on the standardization and broad dissemination of assimilative teachings that were to be



### The Cessation of the "Indian Wars" and the Emergence of Boarding Schools <sup>1</sup>

Leveraging the successful results of his [American Indian] prison camp, Pratt began working closely with the U.S. government to use the tactics employed at Fort Marion as a new model of education to be applied towards American Indian youth. This round-the-clock educational strategy had been in practice in some variety within the handful of church-led boarding schools, but now the United States direct investment would establish several federal boarding schools that would implement the same militaristic techniques that Pratt had employed in Florida. (Fear-Segal, 2007) Most notably, incoming students would be immediately subjected to the complete overhaul of their appearance and attire, and forced into the use of the accepted rules of etiquette as expressed by American society. Additionally, in response to the long-standing complaint how access to their base population and families would often times undermine the progress made by schools at "civilizing" American Indian youth, the government would intentionally design these schools to be constructed far

away from the homelands of the students. (Adams, 1995) If necessary, the administrators of these new schools would be permitted to forcibly remove the children from their homes – or "conscript" them – into mandatory attendance as a condition of their family receiving ongoing subsidies from the government outposts on the reservations. (Fear-Segal, 20017)

As boarding schools began to spring up throughout the western United States, American Indian families began experiencing the extreme hardship of having their children forcibly taken from them and moved off the reservations, far away and



“ THIS HISTORY, CENTERED UPON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EVER-EVOLVING FORMALIZED EDUCATION SYSTEMS OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAS BEEN WROUGHT WITH VIOLENCE, TRAUMA, INJUSTICE, REFORM, AND FINALLY, INNOVATION. ”

used to stabilize and build up the concepts of a national identity, while simultaneously preparing youth for their eventual transition into the industrialized workforce.

<sup>1</sup> The following are excerpts drawn from the full text of *Resurgence: Restructuring Urban American Indian Education*

frightened by what was happening to them, frightened by the prospects of their new "home", frightened by the sudden removal of their brothers and sisters, and tormented by the cold realization and overwhelming heartache that what they once knew as their families were now gone, the school attendants pressed forward with their work with seemingly cold dispatch dedicated to their mission which was their charge.

In order to "kill the savage and save the man", as was the oft used adage of the day popularized by men like Richard Henry Pratt, school officials had been tasked with rebuilding the children now inhabiting the boarding schools into Christianized Americans capable of transitioning into the dominant culture. Boarding schools would cut off the hair of the children (a highly valued cultural attribute for both indigenous boys and girls), immediately strip them of their traditional attire and then dress them into what was considered socially acceptable clothing fashions. School officials would then set to work indoctrinating the youth into learning how to speak English only, and to pray in a manner consistent with attending priests of the church. (Huff, 1997)

Owing to the fact that these new boarding schools were also

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”

where the children would be sheltered overnight, their education was considered to be an "around-the-clock" function – designed to expunge any vestiges of their indigenous roots however they might be expressed by the children. As such, preferred societal etiquette and assimulative educational practices stretched beyond the classroom and were intentionally woven into all facets of daily life for the youth. (Huff, 1997) In short, the formalized education for these children was all-encompassing, and supported by a vicious and violent system of corporal punishment, public shaming, and isolation applied continuously until the student was able to demonstrate proficiency towards conforming to the preferred culture of the United States. What would eventually come to light from the recollections of adult survivors of the boarding

school era were stories of systemic physical abuse exacted on the youth by school officials as a means of dissuading the youth from enacting any semblance of their now former culture. Children were beat with soap bars wrapped in towels, or were forced to work long hours on their knees resting atop sacks of marbles that had been purposefully wrapped around them. Many times, the students themselves were made to beat younger students if they were caught speaking their language, praying in a non-Christian manner, or had the audacity to escape the grounds. (Huff, 1997)

## The Modern Era: 20th Century Public Education and the American Indian People 1

### Sweeping Change in the Early Decades 1

... the swiftly developing United States continued to ensconce itself within its own self-anointed mythos known as "American Exceptionalism." This concept, the direct descendant of the Manifest Destiny invocation from the previous era, was predicated upon the similar idea that divine favor had pre-ordained the United States with a capacity for limitless success and fortune, so long as the nation adhered to its own self-professed ideals enumerated within its founding documents. This self-perceived covenant with supernatural forces placed increased pressure upon the American public education system. Through the schools, it became imperative that each successive generation of students were well versed in America's grace-bestowed methods of operation, as well as to ensure that each completing class was capable of picking up the mantel and carrying forward in the traditions of their fathers and grandfathers to advance "American Exceptionalism" in perpetuity.

For the American Indian students, the arduous experience of es-

entially being imprisoned within boarding schools was not yielding positive results. As more and more youth attempted escape, those that did manage to stay to the end and complete, often found themselves unable to return home for they had crossed over far too deep into the dominant culture and away from their ancestral ways. Equally frustrating was that American Indian graduates also found themselves on the periphery of the dominant culture – where white society was not particularly keen on accepting them as one of their own. More importantly, the rampant poverty and lack of economic development on the reservations (whether industrialized or agrarian) failed to materialize any meaningful changes to the plight of the indigenous people still living there. The influx of newly minted graduates of the public education system did almost nothing to change these circumstances. In essence, the federal system of boarding schools and their complement of missionary-run day schools were not producing the results that they had been constructed for – they were in fact failing.

## Post-War Integration: Economic Boom to Termination and Relocation 1

... the formalized educational processes that had been implemented at the beginning of the 20th Century were in the immediate post-war years expanded upon and reemphasized. For Indian country, the post-war years were quite different from what was occurring within the dominant culture. Only a decade

and a half removed from the expansive change implemented by the Indian Reorganization Act, most of the federally recognized tribal nations and their corresponding infrastructures were nearly entirely subsidized by the federal government.



THE INDIAN RELOCATION ACT OF 1956 SOUGHT TO ENCOURAGE AND TO ACCELERATE THE MOVEMENT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OFF OF THE RESERVATIONS AND INTO NEARBY CITIES WHERE THE POST-WAR ECONOMIC BOOM WAS IN FULL SWING. THERE, UPON THEIR ARRIVAL, THE ACT ALSO SOUGHT TO PROVIDE TRAINING IN VOCATIONAL TRADES TO ALLOW THE NEWLY MOVED AMERICAN INDIAN PEOPLE AN OPPORTUNITY TO FIND MEANINGFUL WORK.



In 1956 a new federal initiative was employed in order to hasten the economic empowerment of the American Indian people, and as a means of contending with collapsing tribal economies that were now in virtual free-fall without federal support. The Indian Relocation Act of 1956 sought to encourage and to accelerate the movement of indigenous peoples off of the reservations and into nearby cities where the post-war economic boom was in full swing. There, upon their arrival, the Act also sought to provide training in vocational trades to allow the newly moved American Indian people an opportunity to find meaningful work. "Relocation", as it would come to be known, saw the division of countless indigenous families throughout Indian country as many enlisted for an opportunity at a more stable financial existence that could not be obtained living on the reservations. Taking advantage of a small stipend and traveling allowances, many American Indians courageously set off for the nearest metropolitan areas in the hopes of finding a new beginning and economic opportunity. (Davis, 2013)

For American Indian students, enrollments within the public schools had hit an all-time high. As once confronted by their elders behind the canopied walls of boarding schools, the curriculum and learning models within America's public schools at the middle of the 20th Century were similarly predicated upon the habits of highly militarized and industrialized society intent on producing as many skilled workers as possible to fuel the nation's economy and to support its

efforts – this time with regards to the Cold War. (Rury, 2002) All considerations regarding indigenous culture, customs, and history were automatically deferred in favor of what was deemed commensurate with being an American citizen. Any deviation from this generally accepted dominant culture was considered an affront to the national identity – providing potential aid to America's communist enemies. As a result, the curriculum used within schools again sought to reinforce the concepts of a national homogeneity that in fact did not exist. (Rury, 2002) If there were inclusions of American Indians, it was to reinforce their savage ancestry, and to celebrate their conquest by the heroic white settler or American military.

Once again, American Indian students were forced to jettison their own cultural identities - including their languages, customs, and religious beliefs - if they were to have a chance at succeeding within the American public education system. The immediate result was a desultory acceptance of this education system, but one that would translate into poor attendance and poor academic performance. (Davis, 2013) As also was the case with their elder predecessors, American Indian students were very often "tracked" into coursework that focused on vocational skill development (for boys) and home economics (for girls).



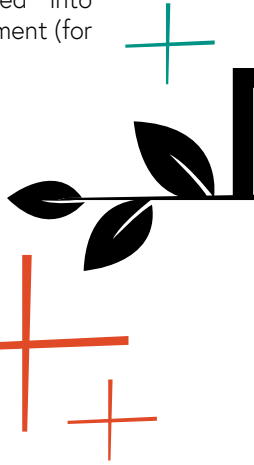
### Dawn of the Resurgence: Civil Rights, Civic Unrest, and Indian Self-Determination <sup>1</sup>

By the 1960's, the Civil Rights movement had been joined by an equally powerful ongoing civic protest against the Vietnam War. Additionally, more and more communities that had been marginalized during the course of America's history were now inspired by these civic protests, prompting their own leadership to become organized, and their own communities to take to the streets to fight for changes in policy in order to better support their own. This conflagration of politics, protest, and cultural empowerment – at times literally combusting in the form of violent urban riots – were anchored in the belief that communities of color must now assert themselves and demand support for their equal rights from the established power structure. The American Indian community was not immune from such desires or actions.

In July of 1968, in Minneapolis, Minnesota the American Indian Movement (AIM) was formed. An urban American Indian political group, AIM took inspiration from other quasi-militant political groups such as the Black Panther Party and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The centerpiece for AIM was to reassert indigenous culture, values, and sovereignty. In so doing, it was

the contention of this movement that the plight of American Indian peoples – as engendered by the dominant U.S. culture – would finally be addressed in a meaningful way. (Hendricks, 2007) AIM sought to redress existing treaty rights, build new social service institutions to mitigate the chronic poverty, destitution, and other debilitating forces that were negatively impacting the community. Primarily based in urban centers, the mission of AIM quickly spread to reservations and throughout all of Indian country.

Within each of these movements, a call for a drastic reform of education for American Indian students was central to their work. Oakes would work to create one of the first American Indian studies programs on the West coast, encouraging many American Indian students to become engaged with such studies as a means of furthering the now expanding indigenous liberation movements that he himself had helped to ignite. By disengaging with the public education system, AIM sought to create a culturally-contextualized model of learning whereby the customs, ceremonies, and histories



<sup>1</sup> The following are excerpts drawn from the full text of *Resurgence: Restructuring Urban American Indian Education*

of indigenous people would become the principle curriculum used. For the leadership of AIM, formalized education of indigenous youth was now to be used as a means of furthering indigenous sovereignty through the education of the community's students.

However, some changes were underway within the system. Finishing the work began by the now late New York Senator Robert F. Kennedy, the U.S. Congress published in 1970 a comprehensive review of the state of American Indian education. Entitled *Indian Education: A National Tragedy - A National Challenge*, this latest report harshly condemned the ongoing failures of the American public education system. In particular, the report savaged the U.S. public education system for its abject failure towards providing curriculum inclusive of indigenous histories or perspectives, for a palpable anti-American Indian fervor within most districts, for the lack of indigenous participation or control over the public education apparatus, for failing to engage with the American Indian parents in a manner consistent with the intent of public schools, and for having no inclusion or regard for indigenous culture within the schooling system. (Government Publishing Office, 84 Stat. 2182, 1970) Additionally,



the report went on to single out federally funded schools as being woefully underfunded, possessing decrepit facilities, and failing to meet the base line academic rigor required to provide for an adequate education for American Indian students.

In response to this bombshell of a condemnation, within three years the U.S. Congress passed the landmark Indian Education Act of 1972 - formally established the Office of Indian Education (later renamed the Bureau of Indian Education, or BIE), provided federal funding to all public school districts that would establish a department dedicated to American Indian education and American Indian student performance at all grade levels (this funding stream would go

on to be referenced as Title VII money – on account of its placement within the 1972 Act), established a requirement for school districts and federally operated schools to work with empaneled indigenous parent groups to ensure that community voices are heard by the system. One of the major results was the sudden creation of Indian Education Departments within local school districts across the country.

Yet despite these new attempts at reform, the changes on the ground and in the classrooms came about very slowly. For the typical American Indian student, not much in the way of meaningful change could even be detected. The downward spiral of poor performance by the public schools regarding indigenous students would continue almost unabated as new performance data would indicate a continuation of a now persistent achievement gap. This continual systemic breakdown was an even more painful experience for the urban indigenous populations. For these people, who were only a few years removed from having transitioned to urban life as a result of termination and relocation policies, the failure of schools to provide a quality education for their youth only served to exacerbate their current challenges.



## Today's Trial and Errors: The Era of Intentional Reform <sup>1</sup>

Now, as we stand within the 21st Century - nearly one-hundred and thirty-five years after the opening of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School - our public school system is still grappling with how best to provide education to Native American youth that is culturally responsive, respectful, and yet can maintain the academic rigor all schools strive for. Within the compendium *Standing Together: American Indian Education As Culturally Responsive Pedagogy*, another group of educators and Native American leaders have once again compiled a collection of essays and papers replete with new and innovative practices designed to support America's public education system towards developing the cultural identity of the Native American students while ensuring their ability to achieve success academically. Now however, the system has been commandeered by the politically fashionable emphasis on high stakes testing and school accountability. Within this work, the various authors present well researched methods for engaging students, and trans-

forming school work from an arbitrary nature to one that is couched in relevance and relational for the students and their culture. They also strongly advocated for the inclusion of Native American history and languages as perfunctory coursework within schools that enroll Native American students. (Klug, 2012) While many advances have been made, the overall commonality with each of these collected works strongly suggests that there quite a bit more work to be done.

Compromising the implementation of these proposed reforms were the most recent pieces of federal legislation specifically designed to improve public education. The No Child Left Behind Act (otherwise known as "NCLB", and that was passed in 2001), and its watered-down successor the Every Student Succeeds Act ("ESSA" – passed in 2015), were successive attempts to spur widespread reform and target the achievement gap for permanent closure by applying strict evaluation standards to gauge the efficacy of America's public



**TO DATE, IN SPITE OF BOTH NCLB AND ESSA, EACH SUCCESSIVE DATA DISCLOSURE BY THE AMERICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM STILL STRONGLY INDICATES THE PERSISTENT PRESENCE OF A YAWNING ACHIEVEMENT GAP BETWEEN WHITE STUDENTS VERSUS THAT OF STUDENTS FROM COMMUNITIES OF COLOR, AND MOST SIGNIFICANTLY, AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS.**





schools. While these two federal acts did effectively leverage the modern advancement in information technologies to tabulate and disaggregate key academic data in order to highlight differing student ethnicity performance for the first time, they fell far short in offering any meaningful supportive strategies to rectify detected shortcomings within schools. Instead, interdiction efforts typically took the form of harsh over-reactions with overly strong punitive measures. Most often, it was the teachers rather than

administrators who were scapegoated as the reasons for poor school performance. Owing the extreme consequences of failing to hit established outcomes and benchmarks, school administrators began dictating to faculty pedagogical approaches to ensure optimum student performance on standardized tests (the preferred instruments by which schools were graded). The result was the immediate disintegration of academic inquiry and critical thinking development for students – all in favor of a

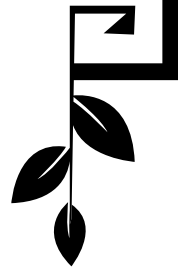
slavish adherence to test preparation. What has come to be known as the "drill and kill" approach to teaching is now unfortunately ubiquitous in most American public schools.

To date, in spite of both NCLB and ESSA, each successive data disclosure by the American public education system still strongly indicates the persistent presence of a yawning achievement gap between white students versus that of students from communities of color, and most significantly, American Indian students.



### Section III: Current Academic Data <sup>1</sup>

The National Urban Indian Family Coalition (NUIFC) has, through the course of its work, come to identify six major urban centers that possess a high concentration of American Indian students attending local public schools that also possess alternative education programs. These alternative learning opportunities and centers have arisen organically within their established systems as fueled by the work of the American Indian community residing there. To understand the genesis of these systems and the commensurate need that gave impetus to their creation, it is important to take a brief examination of the academic data currently being yielded by the school districts within each of these cities. To achieve this, baseline data used for cursory evaluations of public school efficacy have been included within the following section. These metrics culled for inclusion within this report are central data points that have been used for evaluation purposes in both the No Child Left Behind Act, and have now been incorporated within the current Every Child Succeeds Act.



The purpose of including this data within this paper is to generate a snapshot illuminating the relative value of the education currently being provided for American Indian students within these urban centers regarding achievement. While it must be stated that this data will only provide a narrow look into the schools operating within these cities, and as such cannot detail all of the remarkable work being done, and the incredible efforts being pursued, by the dedicated educational professionals working therein. For the purposes of this report, when this information is examined in concert with the depth of historical antecedents that have molded American public education thus far, one will begin to deepen their understanding as to why the progenitors of these alternative models created what they did.

***It is important to note that these data are not representative of the entire population of American Indian & Alaska Native students in each school district as there is a significant undercount of this population.***

<sup>1</sup> The following are excerpts drawn from the full text of  
*Resurgence: Restructuring Urban American Indian Education*

## WHERE WE ARE AT TODAY:

### Key Academic Data from Six Urban American Indian Population Centers

- ◆ Albuquerque, NM
- ◆ Denver, CO
- ◆ Los Angeles, CA
- ◆ Minneapolis, MN
- ◆ Portland, OR
- ◆ Seattle, WA

**CITY, STATE #** Total No. of American Indian Students

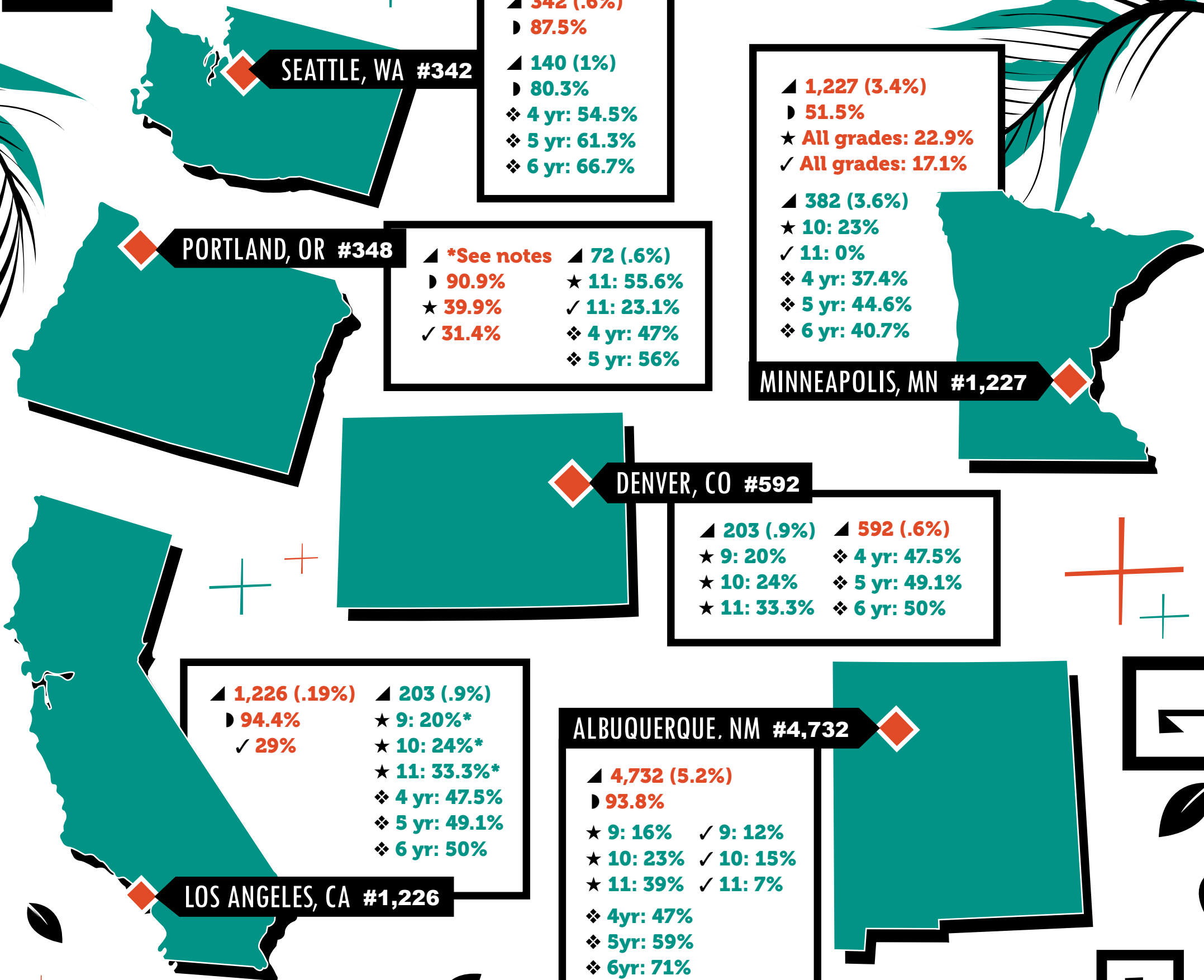
#### Educational Grade Level:

**High School (9-12)**  
District-wide

- ▲ Enrollment No. (% of district)
- Aggregate Attendance Rates
- ★ English literacy achievement: % proficient & above
- ✓ Mathematic Achievement: % proficient & above
- ❖ Graduation Rates: (4 year/5 year/6 Year)

“The grandfathers and the grandmothers are in the children; teach them well.”

- Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) proverb  
(Cleary, 1996, p.64)



**SEATTLE, WA #342**

▲ **342 (.6%)**  
▸ **87.5%**  
▲ **140 (1%)**  
▸ **80.3%**  
❖ **4 yr: 54.5%**  
❖ **5 yr: 61.3%**  
❖ **6 yr: 66.7%**

**PORTLAND, OR #348**

▲ **\*See notes** ▲ **72 (.6%)**  
▸ **90.9%** ★ **11: 55.6%**  
★ **39.9%** ✓ **11: 23.1%**  
✓ **31.4%** ❖ **4 yr: 47%**  
❖ **5 yr: 56%**

**MINNEAPOLIS, MN #1,227**

▲ **1,227 (3.4%)**  
▸ **51.5%**  
★ **All grades: 22.9%**  
✓ **All grades: 17.1%**  
▲ **382 (3.6%)**  
★ **10: 23%**  
✓ **11: 0%**  
❖ **4 yr: 37.4%**  
❖ **5 yr: 44.6%**  
❖ **6 yr: 40.7%**

**DENVER, CO #592**

▲ **203 (.9%)** ▲ **592 (.6%)**  
★ **9: 20%** ❖ **4 yr: 47.5%**  
★ **10: 24%** ❖ **5 yr: 49.1%**  
★ **11: 33.3%** ❖ **6 yr: 50%**

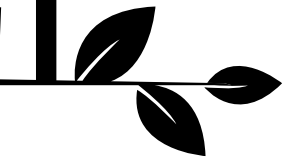
**LOS ANGELES, CA #1,226**

▲ **1,226 (.19%)** ▲ **203 (.9%)**  
▸ **94.4%** ★ **9: 20%\***  
✓ **29%** ★ **10: 24%\***  
★ **11: 33.3%\***  
❖ **4 yr: 47.5%**  
❖ **5 yr: 49.1%**  
❖ **6 yr: 50%**

**ALBUQUERQUE, NM #4,732**

▲ **4,732 (5.2%)**  
▸ **93.8%**  
★ **9: 16%** ✓ **9: 12%**  
★ **10: 23%** ✓ **10: 15%**  
★ **11: 39%** ✓ **11: 7%**  
❖ **4yr: 47%**  
❖ **5yr: 59%**  
❖ **6yr: 71%**

## Section IV: The Featured Sites 1



There was intentionality behind the selection of the six urban centers that serve as the focus of this work. Within each of these selected cities are established alternative programs or alternative schools - or emerging plans to foster such programming - on behalf of an American Indian student population within their public schools. Also, these cities possess American Indian populations that are higher than most other metropolitan areas. Now equipped with a deeper understanding of the historical antecedents that fostered the current climate within American public education, and propelled by the stark data points still being generated by this very system, it becomes understandable as to why the American Indian communities within these urban centers felt compelled

to at least try something different on behalf of their students. If changes were not implemented regarding the approach as to how their youth were educated, there was enough evidence to suggest that these communities would continue to watch wave after successive wave of students endure a foreign culture's system that has historically failed their people.

In response to this very real threat to their young people, these communities acted by creating seven alternative programming and alternative sites that were purposefully anchored within the values of their community and in the belief that the people could no longer afford to remain idle. In nearly all instances, these models were established as a means of addressing a perceived need to help their own by their own means. Now, several years after

their doors were opened, these seven programs have achieved many of the academic outcomes that they had originally set out after - perhaps not to the sweeping degree required - but in demonstrable ways that stand out as an improvement upon the what is being produced by many other school districts across the nation. As such, these community-governed programs were born out of a deep sense of hope, as well as a belief in the possible. For these American Indian communities, a collective vision had emerged that illuminated a pathway forward towards cultural resurgence by reaching back through time for the wisdom propagated by their people well before first contact. In the name of their ancestors and on behalf their children, these communities seized upon that vision without hesitation and set out towards making it a reality

**ADVANCED STATUS**

**DEVELOPED STATUS**

**EMERGING STATUS**

As detailed in the main work, each site has been categorized within three levels of development based on the sophistication of their educational services, contextualization of indigenous cultural practices, and incorporation of alternative learning methodologies - ranging from Emerging, Developed, to Advanced

“  
THESE COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PROGRAMS WERE BORN OUT OF A DEEP SENSE OF HOPE, AS WELL AS A BELIEF IN THE POSSIBLE.  
”

## Denver Public Schools Native American Student Support Program: Denver, Colorado 1

The Denver Public School District operates what is known as the Native American Student Support program (NASS) for Indian Education – which is housed directly within district headquarters itself. The NASS program works in close collaboration with the district office known as the *Department for Student Equity and Opportunity* – whereby the two outfits are considered "educational partners". This department houses a variety of programming predicated on the notion that every child deserves to be welcomed within an inclusive learning environment, and that the academic efforts present within the district should be executed in a manner ensuring that all students succeed both in the classroom as well as in life. In this context, the Title VII federally funded NASS program is well situated within this department's stated mission and goals.

The NASS program provides ongoing support for a reported 850 American Indian students currently enrolled within the district. However, based on their professional experience and familiarity with the local American Indian community living in Denver, it must be stated that NASS believes this number to be in reality higher than what is being reported. Owing to the high mobility rate of the American Indian population that reside within the city - in particular when considering the close proximity to many tribal homelands located in the west-river portions of South Dakota and in neighboring New Mexico, and the fact that many students who have been classified as Latino within the demographic counts are also of indigenous background – the team at the Native American Student Support program believe that the American Indian population is larger than most urban centers. In their estimation, there could be an additional 300 to 400 students added to those rolls at any given moment – pushing the potential total enrollment number for American Indian students within the district closer to 1,100 to 1,200 youth.

Currently comprised of eight highly trained professionals who are assigned work throughout the district – the NASS staff have been tasked with engaging the American Indian students remotely within the mainstream schools where they attend classes on a daily basis. Referred to as *Education Partners*, these particular individuals of the NASS team are themselves

citizens or descendants of indigenous nations. The work of these specialized Education Partners puts them in direct contact with both the American Indian students and their families in an ongoing basis. Such engagement has served to build a strong rapport between the community, the students, and the district – ensuring that input from these key stakeholders is taken into consideration by the schools and district, and then applied for the benefit of their students. As a result of this work, both families and students have felt more welcomed and supported by the public education system, with student academic data starting to rebound in a more positive direction. In the context of daily operations, the Education Partners administer a mentorship program for both students and families – assisting with studies, outside-of-class challenges, as well as participating in Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings for those students receiving Special Education services. This highly personalized approach towards engagement has enabled the NASS to sustain a positive relationship with the American Indian community in service to the educational needs of their students.

The NASS staff also retains the services of a school psychologist to attend to the social emotional needs of American Indian students throughout the district, as well as having two Lakota language specialists to ensure that this particular indigenous language is taught within select classrooms within the system. These language revitalization efforts have been intentionally undertaken as a means of sustaining the life of the language, to provide an ability for American Indian students to earn required "World Language" credits needed for graduation, and to ensure that the opportunity to learn an indigenous language is afforded to all American Indian students who wish to learn. While the enrolled American Indian student population is rather diverse with a variety of tribal affiliations present, the Lakota population is one of the larger groups within Denver, and as such language revitalization efforts have thus far been focused on this particular indigenous language. Through the learning and sustainment of an



indigenous language, it is believed by NASS that American Indian students are better able to learn about their history, as well as to participate within cultural events and ceremonies in a much more involved manner. The inclusion of language development has also provided social and emotional supports for these students as a means of furthering the development of their overall cultural identities. When considering that most American Indian students are attending school within a rather large urban school district (with over roughly 92,000 students total in DPS, the American Indian population comprises about 1% of the overall), the development of American Indian student's cultural identities takes on heightened importance as a means of sustaining individual development, as well as indigenous culture in general.

Beyond the direct activities occurring within the schools, NASS also uses its Title VII funding to provide school supplies for those American Indian families who are in need. (According to recent NASS data, roughly 90% of all enrolled American Indian students within Denver Public Schools qualify for the federal Free and Reduced Lunch program – meaning that their home financial status is at or below federal poverty benchmarks). NASS also provides financial supports for student and community events – such as the annual Christmas Program put on by American Indian students each school year.

Current efforts to expand the alternative offerings within DPS for American Indian students are underway. Specifically, NASS leadership has begun discussions with local American Indian 501c3's operating

1 The following are excerpts drawn from the full text of *Resurgence: Restructuring Urban American Indian Education*

within Denver (and the wider metropolitan area) in an effort to further define and expand the collaborative opportunities that could be shared by each of these entities – including the possibility of creating an alternative school for American Indian students. As it stands, each of these organizations currently provide a wide variety of meaningful services for the same American Indian community within the region, so it is only a logical extrapolation for these various outfits to work towards a mutual network of support between one another. One potential goal that could be achieved through such a collaborative effort would be the creation of a strong American Indian community coalition whereby, working collectively, the group could amplify the presence of American Indian education within DPS, as well as to pull in additional resources, curriculum, and programming opportunities on behalf of their students. Specifically, NASS staff would like to see greater Math and STEM programming being offered directly to American Indian students, as well as the creation of a Preschool program for the youngest of the community to begin their educational pursuits in a manner consistent with indigenous values.



### Seattle Public Schools Huchoosedah Indian Education Program: Seattle, WA 1

*Huchoosedah*, a term used by the Pacific Northwest Lushootseed people to describe the possession of cultural knowledge or the ability to deeply know one's own self, was the name chosen for the Indian Education Services (IES) in the district - the department dedicated to working with American Indian students who live in the greater Seattle metropolitan area. IES was created in the late 1960's, and through the years became one of the preeminent urban American Indian programs in the nation. Having eight dedicated staff members who are all indigenous, this department has endeavored to earn and retain the right to be viewed as the principle vehicle of support for American Indian students enrolled within the district, as well as to serve as a supportive advocate working alongside the American Indian community as well. Through their efforts, the American Indian student population of Seattle have had unprecedented access to culturally-contextualized curriculum, the ability to participate in traditional practices out-of-doors, and have found support through a better educated and engaged faculty teaching within SPS.

One of the center pieces of the work of Huchoosedah involves the ongoing professional development opportunities that the department provides for both administration and faculty. Through their work, the team ensures that educators employed at all levels (primary, middle, and high school) have been trained in understanding the nature of tribal sovereignty, the local indigenous histories, and possess a cursory understanding of customs and practices affiliated with local tribes. These professional development efforts are pursued each school year to ensure that all educators within SPS can better engage and relate to American Indian students. One of the major supports for this training is a one-of-a-kind, state-wide curriculum initiative known as *Since Time Immemorial* (STI). This initiative was championed by the state of Washington's education offices (known as the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction – or OSPI) in partnership with representatives from the 29 federally recognized tribes within Washington. STI was co-created by these parties as a purposefully designed, robust cache of resources and teaching materials that can augment existing social studies curriculum or be used as the primary curriculum for SPS social studies classrooms (to date, STI remains relegated to the content area of social studies, but is working towards the development of resources and curriculum that can be used in the other core content areas that are also required for graduation). Through the incorporation of lessons revolving around tribal sovereignty and related issues, STI offers a variety of materials that can be incorporated directly into classroom instruc-



tion that would remain in alignment with Common Core standards and state requirements. It is the intent of STI – and the professional development pursued throughout the district by Huchoosedah - to improve American Indian student achievement, as well as to sustain the cultural knowledge base for future generations.

To ensure that American Indian students and their families have full access to the Huchoosedah program and the various academic supports offered by IES, each school within the SPS district has an identified "point person" tasked with interfacing with American Indian students enrolled in their building. These identified on-site coordinators are then empowered to engage with the students by assisting them in selecting offered services made available through Huchoosedah. Additionally, these on-site contacts play an important role towards informing the work of the Huchoosedah staff by providing them with information, insights, and observations as to how the department's programming is working in the field, as well as to what information students and community members are offering back to the schools. This channel of communication has served as a powerful tool towards refining programmatic activities to ensure successful performance as well as meeting the needs of each student. Additionally, this ongoing exchange provides relevant guidance to IES as to what the desires and needs of the community are and how their programming can best address the community's wishes. In this way, Huchoosedah can execute programming that is authentic in its honoring of the American Indian communities vision for how schools can and should work on behalf of their own students.

Outside of the day-to-day school delivery, Huchoosedah also provides a myriad of extra-curricular activities to further enhance the educational experience for American Indian students, as well to provide additional opportunities to earn credits while learning about their indigenous culture. Such activities include out-of-doors experiential learning, participation in leadership development programming, and credit retrieval options to support efforts of American Indian students to graduate. In terms of getting students outside onto the land and water of the surrounding area, one of the featured programs involves traditional canoe construction and usage on surrounding waters (including Puget Sound). The canoe activities have proven incredibly

popular with American Indian students, and have been leveraged by Huchoosedah as a means of ensuring academic achievement within the classroom by American Indian students. Additionally, the canoe field trips and activities serve as a powerful teaching mechanism that reinforces and sustains the very culture of the indigenous students that it serves. Complimenting this are activities around fishing and the harvesting of natural medicines and food - whereby American Indian students can learn about their own customs, traditional medicinal practices, and traditional diets. Here again, through all of these program offerings, the work of Huchoosedah continues to sustain indigenous culture while providing opportunities to apply knowledge learned in the classroom out in the field.

The *Native American Youth Leadership Academy* (NAYLA) is an opportunity for American Indian students in SPS (and throughout Western Washington state) to attend training sessions outside of school with community elders and a wide variety of American Indian students from throughout the region to learn about tribal sovereignty, advocacy, and leadership – all taught through a wholly indigenous lens. Begun through a partnership between the *Western Washington Native American Educators Consortiums*, along with regional leaders working within federal Title VII Native Education programs, NAYLA was designed to engage American Indian students between grades eight through twelve from across Western Washington to learn leadership skills and to learn from one another about each students' tribal associations. As the program developed, students were also involved in service learning activities occurring within their base communities, and were also encouraged to take their learnings home with them to be shared within their local school districts - including Huchoosedah. Through NAYLA, students are able to further their understanding regarding their own indigenous culture – which in turn aids in sustaining the survivability for regional indigenous cultures for future generations – and are also empowered to achieve academically to ensure timely completion of their secondary education requirements (i.e.: high school graduation).

Huchoosedah's vision for the future involves the reinstatement, or reconstitution, of a series of alternative schools that are fully anchored within indigenous practice and culture. It is the current belief of the IES team that the advent or implementation of a handful of such alternative learning sites could provide powerful support towards the academic achievement of American Indian students who have become disaffected within the district. The Huchoosedah plan would be the creation of a network of alternative school options throughout SPS for American Indian students to choose from – that way if students or their families preferred the mainstream schooling experience they could continue on with their enrollment therein and still be supported by Huchoosedah. However, if academic success was lacking, or if the environment of the school was not to their liking, or if the family and student wanted a deeper understanding of their indigenous culture, these alternative sites would also be available to them as a part of the overall offerings within the district.



<sup>1</sup> The following are excerpts drawn from the full text of *Resurgence: Restructuring Urban American Indian Education*



## Native American Community Academy: Albuquerque, New Mexico <sup>1</sup>

In the heart of the North Valley of Albuquerque, New Mexico lies the *Native American Community Academy* (more commonly referred to by its acronym "NACA"). A tuition-free charter school authorized by Albuquerque Public School District (APS), NACA was intentionally created to provide a learning environment separate from what is traditionally experienced within the mainstream school setting for American Indian students living within the local urban area.

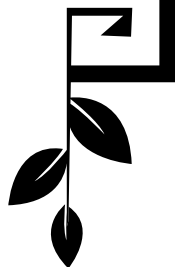
NACA provides educational services for over 425 families annually for elementary, middle, and high school age students. These students originate from the American Indian community throughout the Albuquerque metropolitan region – and so transportation is a key factor in allowing these students to access the NACA campus. All told, the student body has come to reflect over 60 different tribal affiliations throughout the years, with some five different indigenous languages being taught to students at NACA. The course of offerings reflect a balanced blend between the traditional core content areas (such as Math, Indigenous History, Native Literature,

Personal Wellness, Indigenous Science, etc.) in concert with Indigenous teachings and whenever possible, indigenous curriculum. This balance allows for the school to provide rigorous academics for the students in order to empower them to graduate with a high school diploma – as mandated and monitored by their accrediting body and by the APS district who serves as their charter sponsor. It also allows NACA to ensure that the students spend adequate amounts of time developing their own cultural identities as indigenous people throughout the school day as well.

With regards to the inclusion and inculcation of American Indian values, perspectives, and histories, students are offered a variety of curriculum and courses to further deepen their understandings about themselves and their people. The campus has a garden within which students frequently spend time out-of-doors cultivating local traditional medicines, herbs, and spices. Within one health class, students plant, tend, and harvest materials from this garden to make traditional medicinal teas which both students and faculty can drink from directly during the school day. The garden

is also incorporated into Science, Wellness and Language classes. For physical education requirements, the school has a strong and very popular program centered on the traditional indigenous sport of lacrosse, stickball and double ball that has been woven into a health curriculum as well. As students learn about kinetic energy, body development, and nutrition, they are then able to apply and demonstrate those learnings in real time by participating within the inter-school and external competitive lacrosse teams (which are also supported by a strong inclusion of indigenous history to detail the proper origins of the sport).

Additionally, indigenous language courses are also available for students to take (and are equally as popular as lacrosse). Owing to accessibility, the NACA administration and faculty have implemented a Lakota language course taught by Lakota language speakers (this is unique for the principle tribal affiliations near Albuquerque are the Navajo and the Pueblo – but suggestive of the typical



diversity of tribal presence within most urban settings). The Lakota language had many speakers and representatives living near the school and so it was a logical selection for the school to make.

For those students making sufficient progress and who have demonstrated an interest, NACA also provides a slate of nationally recognized Advanced Placement courses (otherwise commonly referred to "AP classes") for students to pursue once they become upperclassmen within the High School portion of the campus. All students, unless expressly stipulated in their IEP, take an AP course. Though rather rigorous, the access to AP coursework allows students to earn college credit before ever enrolling into a post-secondary program (dependent upon their final exam test scores). Even more significantly, AP offerings within the school further develop the student for an easier transition into post-secondary institutions for the students become far more acclimated to the demands of that type of curriculum. Additionally, scores earned by students within AP courses can greatly improve overall grade point averages and enable successful students to earn scholarships and potentially increasing the likelihood to being accepted into more post-secondary universities across the nation.

Owing to the wide array of personal histories that come with the students who are accepted into the school, there are times when old traumas or outside pressures can negatively impact a student despite the progress that they are making with their studies. To this end, the NACA faculty emphasizes a trauma informed approach under the direction of the NACA Student Support Services (that include behavioral health, medical and dental services) when working in partnership with affected students, and whenever possible, their families as well. Each week, students participate within a cohort setting of the same 10 students, led by a NACA faculty facilitator. These Advisory Activities are not only used to keep students connected with regular school activities, but they also serve as an important touch point where staff can learn about any potential issue percolating through the student body, or surrounding an individual pupil. If necessary, support staff are deployed for an intervention to provide immediate assistance to a student in need. Woven throughout these interventions are indigenous practices and ceremonial elements that are integral to stabilizing the student, and working with them to

cope with the issues at hand. The campus even possesses a "safe space" known as the Eagle Room, full of traditional indigenous items and symbols, to provide an area for students who are feeling overcome by their personal traumas and need time to collect themselves before returning to class.

Another type of care provided at the school is indicative of one of the most powerful and unique features of NACA. Onsite medical and dental care is provided for students and the community through an innovative partnership with local indigenous nonprofits who agreed to provide services on campus. If the student is maintaining active enrollment, they will be able to schedule appointments with either a licensed dentist or licensed health care provider to tend to their needs. Additionally, social and emotional behavioral specialists also provide onsite services for NACA students through similar partnerships between the school and local American Indian nonprofit service providers. For many within the community, living in the shadow of many years of inadequate services, the trust between the people and the service providers has been corroded. Yet through the inclusion of these offerings at NACA, the school has leveraged the trust invested in it as a learning institution to where the community once again reengages with these other services. This partnership represents another hallmark of NACA – a strong collaborative presence with other 501c3's (both Native American and non-Native), outside of their academic programming. These partnerships include both social service programs and post-secondary institutions that in one way or another provide additional services for the American Indian community throughout the greater Albuquerque region.

NACA currently participates within 24 formalized partnerships with external organizations. These collaborative efforts allow the school to access a wide variety of additional educational resources for their enrolled students that can either be used on campus within the classrooms, or serve as supplemental curriculum in the form of field trips or extended learning opportunities. Additionally, through the use of this network of providers, NACA has created

**70%** Four Year Graduation Rate

**71%** Retention Rate (students returning from previous year)

**86%** of students participate in community service

**74%** of students reporting that their families are engaged with school activities

a myriad of out-of-school pathways for students to apply their learning within the real world in terms of additional training or employment, or to pursue additional academic credentialing after graduation.

The school employs a variety of programing housed under the umbrella term referred to as *Outside of School Time* (OST). OST is powered by a collaborative project between NACA and the University of New Mexico – leveraging the university's program for community service and service learning projects pursued by its own enrolled students (known as the UNM *Community Learning and Public Service* program, or CLPS). This particular program at the university has a tract specifically designed for tribal outreach (known as the *Tribal Service Corps of UNM*) that has enabled undergraduate students to provide tutoring services directly to NACA students after the school day has concluded. However, these after-school experiences go well beyond assistance with homework (which is in fact just one of the offerings). In addition, students and the university tutors have formed specialized groups with curriculum designed to expand the capacities of the students academically, as well as to how they engage the wider world outside of NACA. Classes around filmmaking, traditional Lakota drumming and singing, leadership development and mentoring, a comic book club, softball club, a girls group dedicated to women's issues, and even a martial arts class have all been offered through NACA's OST program to further develop students during the course of a school year. All of these offerings are





powered by the resources and materials (both in terms of curriculum and human capital) that is accessible by NACA through the use of its strategic partnerships.

NACA's learning programs go far beyond the typical school year. During the summer intercession, the school sponsors what it refers to as "Learning Trips" where students travel to a variety of locations

to augment the material they are learning within the classroom. Examples include *Emerging Leaders Development Trips* taken to places such as Washington D.C., and formal Cultural Exchanges like when NACA students visited the Maori people on their homelands located in New Zealand. The purpose of these trips is to stretch the concept of the learning space to include real world places where the material that

the students have been studying is actually occurring or being utilized. By expanding the students experience through exposure to and embedding within these foreign sites, the students gain a deeper understanding about their role, their future, and how their community fits into the wider world beyond the geographic confines of where they happen to live.



### NAYA Early College Academy: Portland, Oregon <sup>1</sup>

In the early 2000's, at the height of the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) era, the challenges being encountered by Portland's American Indian students had grown more acute – as evidenced by the recently disaggregated academic achievement data as mandated by the NCLB federal legislation. The leadership of NAYA and the surrounding urban American Indian community came together once again to address the shockingly low graduation rates being earned by American Indian students within the district. From these latest gatherings, a plan was set forth to create an alternative school that would address and remedy the persistent academic shortcomings. To accomplish this task, NAYA leadership insisted that the new school embrace and rely upon indigenous culture in the same manner as the other programs housed at the organization, and would offer a smaller learning environment whereby a genuine sense of relatedness could be shared between the students

and the wider American Indian community present within NAYA's campus. In addition, students within this new alternative school would have full access to all of the other services and programs that were offered on-site – essentially creating a "one-stop shop" for American Indian students of Portland to utilize whenever they are in need. If administered in this way, this new school could serve as a second chance for those students that had yet to achieve academic success or who had grown disaffected with the mainstream school system. Through a generous grant awarded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2006, NAYA was able to bring in the necessary capital and human talent to make this new alternative school a reality.

At that time, Portland Public Schools already had in place an innovative program to help students who were at risk of dropping out of school, as well as reengaging and reenrolling those students who already

had. Known as the *Multiple Pathways to Graduation* initiative, this program saw PPS contract out to local non-profits in order to create a network of alternative learning centers to provide assistance and new learning opportunities for these at-risk students. NAYA, leveraging the assistance recently provided by the Gates Foundation, sought out and successfully procured a contract with PPS. The only difference between NAYA and the other alternative sites within the PPS program was that NAYA intentionally set out to engage American Indian students as a priority (although as a public school, all interested and eligible students – whether Native American or non-Native – are welcomed to enroll.) In the fall of 2008, the doors opened to the new PPS contracted alternative school located within NAYA itself.

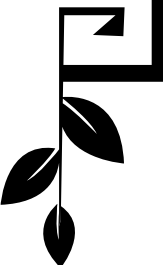
Known as the NAYA Early College Academy (NAYA-ECA), the school endeavored to create a learning environment that was



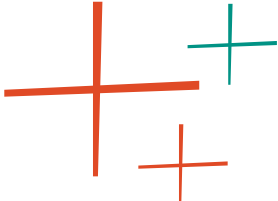
deeply rooted within the culture, teachings, and practices of the surrounding tribal nations. Also, in an echo of its founding principles and programs, ECA provides academically rigorous programming to ensure American Indian student achievement whereby the number of American Indian graduates grows each successive school year, and for those who do graduate, there is a successful transition into post-secondary institutions. In its essence, NAYA-ECA seeks to address the systemic shortcomings the community continues to believe exists within the Portland public education system that as a result, continues to fail so many students - particularly students from the local American Indian community.

To this end, NAYA-ECA has created a learning environment that intentionally deviates from what is traditionally experienced within a mainstream setting. There is a focus on small class sizes to foster a stronger relational element between students, staff, and faculty. More often than not this cannot be achieved within the comprehensive high schools of PPS for the amounts of students moving through district buildings each year is just too large. Upon enrollment in NAYA-ECA, students and staff develop an individualized educational blueprint to help guide students through their coursework at the school, as well to help keep them focused on achievement and graduation. This plan is reviewed and renewed each year until the student graduates.

In terms of academic offerings, NAYA-ECA seeks a balance between inculcating indigenous culture in all facets of its programming (curriculum, dispute resolution, project-based learning, after-school activities, etc.) with an academically rigorous engagement of the traditional core content areas required for graduation from PPS - and necessary for successful post-secondary matriculation. Through the combination of more individualized attention given to each learner, an adherence to indigenous culture and perspectives, and a focus upon academic rigor, NAYA-ECA has purposefully created an environment where students representing a wide array of achievement



and capabilities can enroll and find success. This is important to note, for NAYA-ECA – as a school under contract with PPS – is itself in effect a public school required to accept all students who apply to enroll (with the exception of some of the more intensive special education students whose needs are beyond the capacities of the school). For other alternative programming within Indian country, this is not always the case as some institutions can deny entry if the student doesn't meet the enrollment standards set by that particular school. NAYA-ECA, on the other hand, welcomes all who come – so long as they have room.



Overall, NAYA-ECA (and NAYA as an organization in general) formally adheres to the guiding principles of the *Relational Worldview Model* – an interactive paradigm that was based upon a similar ideology first developed by the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA). This model was drawn from indigenous belief systems that are reflected and shared across a multitude of indigenous cultures throughout North America. In its essence, this model emphasizes a circular or interconnected concept of reality predicated on interrelatedness and interdependence between all living things. When properly understood, a more healthy existence can be found by its practitioners whenever they act with a sense of mindfulness and balance. This model purposefully eschews the more Western European belief systems that have long-since dominated U.S. public education, whereby life and society are overly dependent upon the concepts of linear time, scarcity, and hyper-individualism – all of which are viewed as contrary to the systems exhibited by the natural world - and therefore toxic by definition.

In its place, the Relational Worldview Model suggests that humans are comprised of four equal parts - reflecting mental and emotional development (the mind), physical well-being (the body), a timeless wisdom that is derived through prayer and ceremony (the spirit), and a commitment building positive relationships and social justice (context). Each of these four areas comprise the totality of all living things – including that of human beings. By acknowledging and honoring each of these four arenas, and working to maintain a balance between them all, the model suggests that an interdependent harmony can be created between life and its environment, and between living beings themselves. As such, the four quadrants reflected within this model are repeatedly integrated into the educational plans of NAYA-ECA students, the functionality of the day-today classrooms within the building, as well as reinforced through NAYA-ECA faculty's classroom management styles and the restorative justice practices. Additionally, this model also informs the critical-thinking activities pursued by students as they continually assess the world in which they and their community live, and how they might contribute to enhancing its overall health.

With regards to its incorporation of local indigenous culture into the curriculum and teaching methodologies employed by the school, NAYA-ECA provides culturally-contextualized art classes, indigenous language courses, and cross-generational project-based learning activities that directly engages local community elders (who in turn serve as de facto staff and family to help NAYA-ECA students succeed). The school also operates a large outdoor garden where students can learn about indigenous horticulture and traditional medicines by actively growing and caring for such plants as a part of their coursework.

Additionally, the school also participates in an annual event known

<sup>1</sup> The following are excerpts drawn from the full text of *Resurgence: Restructuring Urban American Indian Education*

as the Canoe Journey. This event is put on through a collaboration with the Portland Youth and Elders Council, and whose sum total of activities transcends more than traditional canoeing on local waters (which is naturally the main event). Also included in this work are learning opportunities centered upon traditional practices that have upheld the indigenous nations of this region – activities such as traditional clothing production, indigenous singing, dancing, and drumming. Additionally, the Canoe Journey affords students an opportunity to commune with a multitude of age groups – including elders and the very young – where traditional wisdom is shared and absorbed by all. One of the more powerful yet often overlooked aspects of Canoe Journey is the employment of STEM teachings for the students (Science, Engineering, Mathematics, and Science) as participants build and maintain traditional canoes while learning all about the natural environment that is found on their lands and beneath the water during the entirety of the experience. The incorporation of STEM supports many of the other content areas taught to students during the regular school day.

For the more traditional subject matter required for credit obtainment and graduation, the core content areas are taught in small classes throughout the day by licensed faculty, but consistently inculcate American

Indian perspectives, histories, and practices whenever applicable. Beyond this, NAYA also offers classes that utilize post-secondary curriculum for those students who are academically eligible. These cross-over classes allow students to earn dual credits both for high school graduation, but also potential credits that can be applied to a post-secondary institution *after* graduation. While the environment may be much smaller than the mainstream schools, the emphasis on graduation and college enrollment is no less intensive at NAYA-ECA than at any other high school. Student academic capabilities are cultivated within a supportive yet challenging environment that are guided by the same indigenous principles found in all other NAYA programming beyond NAYA-ECA.

As a result of these efforts over the first ten years of operation, NAYA-ECA has seen repeated increases in their student retention as more and more students stay in school, and return each fall after summer break. This commitment to attendance is in all reality new for many of these American Indian students who, up until their enrollment in NAYA-ECA, had already dropped

NAYA

**75%** Retention Rate  
(students returning from previous year)

**20%** average increase of daily attendance for enrolled students from previous schools

out or were so woefully behind that they were in very real danger of exiting early without a diploma or the skill sets needed to survive and thrive within the urban setting of Portland, Oregon.

As was evidenced within the other urban areas examined, it was through the insistence and action taken by community elders and leadership on behalf of their students, a community space was created to provide an alternative to the more traditional educational systems in place. Although it started off small, the ECA program at NAYA continues to grow – filling a need and meeting the desires of the local American Indian community to have their own school based on their own values, but one that can also educate their youth in a manner necessary to find wellness within the dominant culture and the academic capabilities to ensure their student's and community's future survival have been provided for.



## Nawayee Center School & Takoda Prep of AIOIC: Minneapolis, Minnesota <sup>1</sup>

Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), as demonstrated through the work currently being conducted by its Indian Education office has become one of the most engaged and progressive school districts in the country regarding its work with American Indian students. This was no accident, and certainly not achieved through a unilateral effort. Over the course of the past forty-five years, this office has come into close collaboration with the American Indian community of Minneapolis in order to provide better services that enhance and support the unique culture of the people, while simultaneously working to improve educational outcomes for their students.

Nawayee Center School has purposefully set out to deconstruct the traditional delivery models of public education. In its wake, it would replace such structures with a less rigid, more relaxed learning environment predicated on American Indian cultural values. In this new space, the concept of "relatedness" became the organizing principal upon which the school was based.

Currently, Nawayee continues to offer a blended approach to curriculum whereby traditional indigenous customs are interwoven with the standard school subjects. To this end, activities such as learning the drum, traditional singing, regalia construction, and beading find equal exposure to the students, along with the core subjects of Social Studies, English, Mathematics, Science, etc. However, even the standard subjects are inculcated with indigenous perspectives and histories at every opportunity – such as through the use of Native authors, indigenous creation stories, and political histories – all as a way of adding greater personal relevance to the material being covered. In some instances, in a nod to their earliest days, elders from the community are invited into the classes to teach alongside faculty – thus adding even further indigenous perspective to the core content offerings. In so doing, the school reinforces student concepts of what it means to be indigenous while living within the dominant culture, and with the assistance of community elders, provides a sense of individual purpose as to why it is necessary to do so.

Whenever possible, the students pursue their studies out-of-doors – expanding the notion of what constitutes a classroom and



where learning can occur. Examples of their utilization of outdoors learning environments include the maintenance of a sizeable urban garden adjacent to their building where traditional foods and medicines are grown by the student body, canoe trips on local waters – including an annual mass outing on Lake Mde Maka Ska (formerly known as Lake Calhoun), trips to plant wild rice, or outings to collect maple syrup in a traditional manner on northern Minnesota forests (known as "sugar bushing"). These outdoor activities achieves the experiential learning components that have become a hallmark of the school.

Nawayee faculty and staff pay special attention to sustaining a positive and welcoming environment that is cognizant of the trauma's endured by community members during their time in the public education system, or else in recognition of the trauma recently experienced by students or as a result of living in an urban environment. To this end, the faculty and staff utilized a trauma informed approach towards student engagement and classroom management. Trauma informed approaches makes special emphasis on recognizing all forms of potential trauma (physical, mental, spiritual) and taking time to create a safe and supportive environment where the students can learn strategies designed to empower themselves to navigate through the issues that might be triggering negative responses or poor choices.

Once again, key to the success of this approach is the inclusion of traditional ceremonial practices that sustain the supportive environment sought by Nawayee staff and that can engender healing amongst all who come through the school's doors. These practices include what the staff refer to as the Four Sacred Practices: Smudging (an indigenous purification custom using burning

sage and prayer to cleanse the body and mind), Talking Circles (a form of collective communication between the entire student body and staff as a means of enacting an alternative dispute resolution process to further foster the sense of community within the school), Sweats (another indigenous purification ceremony whereby participants enter into a traditionally constructed lodge that uses extreme heat and steam to cleanse the physical body, coupled with song and prayer), and the Vision Journey (this is the school's interpretation of the individual communing with nature and the spiritual world through fasting and prayer until they feel a deep sense of connection - whereby a "vision" is then given to the student to guide them forward along their life's path. This is often typified by the annual trip taken to the Black Hills – a sacred Lakota landmass - with eligible seniors.). Throughout all of these processes, as well as through each and every day at the school, Nawayee goes to great lengths to incorporate the four sacred medicines of the Anishinaabe people – cedar, sage, tobacco, and sweet grass – to guide these practices, to allow for traditional prayer, and to further teach students about their indigenous culture all within the models of relatedness and a trauma informed approach predicated on health and healing.

The American Indian OIC (AIOIC – with the OIC standing for "Opportunities and Industrialization Center") was founded in 1979 as a means of addressing the chronic poverty and lack of meaningful income that was still dramatically impacting the urban American Indian population of the Twin Cities since the days of Termination and Relocation. The American Indian OIC spent its first decades providing employment services, GED training, and career training through an accredited post-secondary school housed on their campus.

<sup>1</sup> The following are excerpts drawn from the full text of *Resurgence: Restructuring Urban American Indian Education*





In 1994, empowered by a sizeable U.S. Department of Labor grant, the AIOIC started the *School To Work High School*. During its initial years of operation, School To Work High focused on employment preparation through vocational skill development in business applications and health care, soft skill development, and credit obtainment to allow students to both earn a high school diploma and simultaneously be placed in a career pathway upon completion.

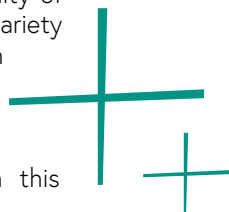
Eventually the curriculum was completely renovated and purposefully "indigenized" – replacing the previous emphasis on vocational training with a return to the more standard content areas required for high school graduation, with additional focus placed on transitioning into college matriculation. Additionally, further inclusion of indigenous customs and practices into the daily operations of the school were also reintroduced in far greater measure – including the incorporation of Talking Circles, smudging, and the use of tobacco ties for individual

prayer when requested or when used as part of a community ceremony. At all turns, indigenous histories, perspectives, customs, and stories were inculcated into the standard subjects to add relevance for students, and to reinforce the development of their own cultural identities. Leveraging its status as a state innovative program, the high school began introducing more and more American Indian elders into the classroom as a means of further deepening student understandings about their heritage and community. Whenever possible, students are taken out-of-doors to pursue their studies – often times participating in traditional activities as canoe trips (the school currently just completed constructing its own canoe utilizing traditional Anishinaabe techniques), wild ricing (planting and harvesting), "sugar bushing" (traditional indigenous maple syrup collection), along with a multitude of excursions exploring the natural features existing within the Twin Cities metropolitan areas (including lakes, rivers, and city parks) where projects linked to the standard school subjects are

then pursued. Through these project-based, experiential learning activities the students are challenged to incorporate indigenous value systems to enhance their understandings of the standard core subjects that are also being taught.

Breaking free from the mainstream system of rigidly structured schools that separated pupils by age groupings or by capability levels, the high school at AIOIC – now known as *Takoda Prep of AIOIC* – also intentionally incorporated indigenous values around learning in community. To begin, the physical construct of the learning space was restructured. Students now sit in circles in small groups facing one another so as to foster better communication between participants. The room itself – a singular learning space predicated on old, rural one-room school houses, was arranged in a circular pattern with three distinct teaching stations located on the perimeter – replete with white boards, video projectors, smart boards, and speaking podiums. In this way, the teachers are encouraged to utilize all teaching stations either within a class period or throughout the week in order to again reinforce the circular arrangement of the classroom – thus eliminating any notion of a "front" or "back" of the room. The circle is a powerful semiotic code for Anishinaabe, Dakota, and Lakota peoples – signifying natural and spiritual cycles observed within the wider, natural world, as well as arrangements in ceremonial practices. Inclusion of circular arrangements within the learning space also helps activate prior knowledge associated with indigenous customs that the students might not even be aware of that they possess (what the community refers to as "blood memory"), as well as helps foster a genuine supportive comradery amongst the students.

Within this setting, students function as a singular cohort. In this way, the entire student body (currently capped at 45 students for the entire school) remain as one group while the content and faculty rotate through the learning space, transitioning from one subject area to another. In this way, any artificial distinctions that are usually enforced within mainstream schools between ages, grade levels, or capabilities are removed. In its place is a community of learners possessing a variety of skill sets that can be harnessed for the construction of new knowledge amongst the students themselves. In this



manner, faculty serve not only as teachers, but as facilitators and students themselves, as they must continually learn from their students to incorporate their views and experiences into their own practice. Once underway, the faculty and the students then work collaboratively to address the curriculum. By and large, most activities are project based and dependent upon a series of critical thinking activities, self-reflection, and group presentation. The students then also function as an internal accountability network as the larger group and the smaller groups within the school take ownership in supporting one another to complete their work and accomplish their goals. This collective support often manifests in students volunteering to tutor to one another depending on where their individual skills sets reside, to create their own study groups in order to better prepare for projects and assessments, and to celebrate one another's success - whereby the group serves to propel itself onward to greater academic achievement.



The effects of these changes have resulted in a dramatic increase and stabilization of student attendance after enrollment, and increase in overall student credit obtainment, and an increase of students who had formerly been behind actually completing and earning their high school diploma. Above all, the new formatting of the school enabled the fostering of a genuine sense of belonging within a community of learners that had never been felt by these students within the mainstream system. When combined with an academically rigorous approach to the standard curriculum, and the inculcation of indigenous culture woven throughout the practices of the school, students have been able to find themselves as indigenous people while reengaging and finding success with their academics. In 2016, MPS would produce a new record number of American Indian graduates – 71 in total, of which 10 came from Takoda Prep of AIOIC alone. Takoda Prep has sustained a collective attendance rate at or above 80% during this same time frame, achieved Adequate Yearly Progress for each of the final years of NCLB (2007 – 2012), and holds a consistent graduation rate of eligible seniors above 90%.

Externally, both Nawayee and Takoda Prep have also engaged with the other various Minneapolis-based indigenous non-profits providing services to the community beyond schooling. Partnerships designed to improve the overall social-emotional and physical health of the students have been incorporated into the offerings at each school. To this end, local American Indian non-profits have begun sending their staff into both Takoda and Nawayee to work directly with students to provide one-on-one counseling, health check-ups, financial literacy trainings, and employment services. In this way, these external partnerships have allowed enrolled students to have a variety of their needs met that were not necessarily available to them within the mainstream schools – thus providing them with a more comprehensive form of development and support all within a culturally-contextualized manner.

Throughout the course of all these programmatic shifts and innovations, the MPS Indian Education Department and MPS School Board have remained a committed partner to both Nawayee and Takoda Prep. During the recent refresh of the landmark and only-one-of-its-kind Memorandum of Agreement between the district and the community as implemented in 2003 and refreshed in 2017, both schools were officially deemed "Best Practice Sites" by the MPS Indian Education Department with an emphasis on assisting both



**Nawayee**

**90%** Eligible Senior Graduation Rate  
Averages 13 Graduates per year  
(out of total student body of 100)

**13** Graduates per year Averages  
Graduates per year  
(out of total student body of 100)

**Takoda**

**90%** Eligible Senior Graduation Rate

**85%** Retention Rate  
(students returning from previous year)

**80%** School-wide Attendance Rate

**30%** average increase of daily attendance for enrolled students from previous schools

<sup>1</sup> The following are excerpts drawn from the full text of *Resurgence: Restructuring Urban American Indian Education*

with their innovative endeavors to meet the unique needs of the American Indian students attending school in Minneapolis. In the years to come, both schools would like to expand – replicating their models

so as to allow for greater numbers of students to enroll, as well as to play their part in helping American Indian students achieve the highest academic potential that they can.



### Semillas Community Schools: Los Angeles, California <sup>1</sup>

In East Los Angeles lies three small campuses providing comprehensive educational services for nearly 400 students at all levels of schooling – from Kindergarten through the 12th grade. These campuses are all part of an alternative design to education not found anywhere else within the greater Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Operated by a community organization known as *Semillas Community Schools*, these campuses comprise three educational operations of a single charter school entitled *Anahuacalmecac International University Preparatory*. This school was founded and operates on the principles of harnessing the culture, belief systems, and the values of indigenous Mesoamerican cultures of their base community through their direct inclusion of learning environment. The administrators of these schools believe that weaving their culture throughout all functions of the school would be the most beneficial approach to benefit their student's academic achievement.

The first attempt at a charter – through the LAUSD School Board– was summarily rejected on the grounds that it was unnecessary, and that the introduction of any culturally-based education that did not reinforce the dominant American culture was unwelcome. Undeterred, these indigenous leaders and indigenous educators would travel all the way to Sacramento, California in order to secure authorization of their school's charter through the California State Department of Education – essentially circumventing the intransigent LAUSD and the local school board. In 2002, the K-3rd grade *Academia Semillas del Pueblo Charter School* (the first *Semillas Sociedad Civil* school) opened its doors to indigenous students.

Almost immediately, the local indigenous community took full advantage this newly created educational option and began enrolling their youngest students to receive their formalized education at *Academia Semillas del Pueblo Charter School* – openly eschewing the mainstream schools of LAUSD. The first enrollment in 2002 would top out at incredible 139 students. Even in

the face of such large initial enrollment figures, there was an even more impressive element that spoke to the powerful desire of the community to have their own indigenous school. This new public charter school as yet did not have a building! Instead, making full use of the temperate Southern California climate, school during this initial year was convened in a local park (El Sereno Park amongst the natural elements found therein). Faculty and administrators brought the curriculum and learning materials to the site via cars, vans, and carts – unfolding distributing materials as needed as each day progressed. What would seem as a tremendous difficulty was quickly turned into a structural advantage for *Semillas*. The natural environment within which the school was forced to operate during its initial years was immediately woven into the teachings offered to the young students as a powerful tool reinforcing the community's cultural belief systems as having a responsibility to serve as stewards of Mother Earth in accordance with the ways of their ancestral teachings.

As each successive grade progressed through its studies, *Semillas* leadership expanded course offerings, and eventually expanded additional grade levels to accommodate the progression of older students in need of upper grade schooling. By the year 2008, *Semillas* provided indigenous education through two distinct programs, K-8th grade, and 9th-12th grades respectively. Today, the name *Anahuacalmecac International University Preparatory* is the umbrella term for the entirety of educational services provided through their K-12 state charter. Over the past three years, many of the high school graduates of *Anahuacalmecac* that have earned their diplomas have spent their entire public school career within *Anahuacalmecac*, beginning their time as Kindergartners.

The focus of the curriculum within each grade level is to provide students with an education fully contextualized within the culture and language of the indigenous



communities living in Los Angeles. For many, this is the traditional culture of the Aztec people and their language of Nahuatl is the primary language engaged in throughout much of the educational pursuits within *Anahuacalmecac*. In reality however, and duly recognized by *Anahuacalmecac* staff, this particular urban center encompasses nearly 40 to 50 other indigenous affiliations reflected in a wide diversity of indigenous people and languages living within the Los Angeles basin (a fact that owes its origins to the dramatic increases occurring after the enactment of federal Termination and Relocation policies of the 1950's – as it was in other urban centers). Through the adoption of such an educational approach, the founders of *Anahuacalmecac* strive to educate their students not only in their own culture, but to further the student's understanding about the rights and dignity of all indigenous cultures globally.

During the course of the academic year, students are engaged with critical thinking activities and civic engagement opportunities to allow for actual activities towards supporting indigenous community rights, and to work towards deconstructing antiquated colonial tactics of the dominant culture that seek the continuance of oppression against first nations. Within the early grades, students learn cultural values reflecting learning and behavior norms held in esteem by their indigenous community. These cultural values are taught or reinforced within all classes, often times



## Anahuacalmecac

# 89%

eligible high school students enrolled in University of California approved college preparatory classes

## Semillas

# 100%

of all pupils enrolled in grade 12 graduated in 2017.

# 79%

of all 2017 graduating pupils met all UC/CSU eligibility requirements.

# 100%

of students are enrolled in Nahuatl indigenous language curriculum

having been integrated within student daily work or by allowing their exhibition during various group activities and games that are enacted throughout the course of each school day.

Language immersion classes are offered throughout the continuum of educational services at Anahuacalmecac, right through the 12th grade, with Nahuatl being the primary focus. Through the inclusion of their indigenous language, students are better able to engage in and learn more from the other cultural practices that are employed within the school – including daily welcome and prayers (referred to as morning protocols), as well as participating in traditional Aztec drum and dance ceremonies (known as Danza) which also plays an integral role for all age groups within the school towards understanding the essence of the culture and its values. Also, through the acquisition and refinement of their indigenous language, the youth become better prepared to sustain their indigenous culture for future generations to use and live by, thereby counteracting the corrosive effects of the dominant culture that seeks to homogenize all citizens within its own image. Beyond Nahuatl, the school also teaches English and Spanish to ensure students retain strong communication between their extended families, and further develop their capacities to successfully navigate through the practices required of the dominant culture of Los Angeles. In this respect,

many of the graduates of Anahuacalmecac have learned the skills to become tri-lingual, and possess a distinct advantage over most mainstream high school graduates.

All of this is balanced out with an academically rigorous curriculum that seeks to prepare students for immediate transition into post-secondary enrollments or into meaningful career placement. Anahuacalmecac is an approved International Baccalaureate (IB) school which calls for the inclusion of curriculum that includes global perspectives, cross-cultural examinations, and a level of rigor that is considered to be optimum for post-secondary matriculation. Similar to Advanced Placement courses (AP courses), IB schools differ by integrating the concepts of global cultures and global perspectives throughout all classes, and at all grade levels. Unlike the high stakes testing affiliated with AP work, IB classes and assessments typically involve more research, writing, and hands-on appraisals focusing primarily on the development of the student's critical thinking capacities, whereas AP course have a tendency at times to focus more on rote memorization of facts and figures. As an IB school, Anahuacalmecac provides its students with an ability to think deeply about their own culture and its place within the global diaspora of indigenous peoples, the effects of colonization, and the remaining work yet to be accomplished towards actively de-colonizing society to the point where all indigenous communities can thrive and live in peace.

In addition, the Anahuacalmecac has incorporated Danza – the traditional practice of Aztec dance and drumming. For all intents and purposes, Danza has

become an important organizing principle for both students and staff alike. This ancestral expression of spirit, art, community, language, music, strength, and health has been woven into many aspects of the academic programs as well. For those students willing to participate, Danza is taught both expressly so that students can learn the movements and meaning behind the ritual of dancing, or if preferred, students can learn the artform of drumming in the culturally appropriate manner – also complete while learning about the cultural and historical significance of such activities. Through it all, Danza represents a physical manifestation of the community's culture amongst the people, and so is highly valued as academic tool to further develop the youth of the people. In many instances, students and staff lead Danza activities within the public sphere in direct support of the civic engagement activities pursued by the school as a whole. Through Danza, the cultural contextualization of Anahuacalmecac is sustained in a very visceral and dramatic fashion.

There is much regarding the narrative arc of Anahuacalmecac and the Semillas Community Schools that echoes many of the same elements found within the stories of the other sites examined within this work. Here again, the creation of an alternative approach to education was born out of the dogged insistency of the local indigenous community. Once in place, this particular community-governed school was focused on inculcating indigenous culture as the central structure around which the educational enterprise was then constructed. Broad and enthusiastic support by both students and community members helped sustain the school's daily operations.

<sup>1</sup> The following are excerpts drawn from the full text of *Resurgence: Restructuring Urban American Indian Education*



## Section V: Insights <sup>1</sup>

### The Four Phases of Community Immersion <sup>1</sup>



In total, some 14,919 miles were traveled in the course of conducting site visits to the various alternative programs and alternative schools examined within this work. Seven sites in total were visited, in six different states, all within each of those state's largest cities. The geographic climates were as disparate and varied as the wide distances between each would suggest – from the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, the red-rocked deserts of the American Southwest, along the tree-lined ridges of the Cascade Mountains and the gray waters of Puget Sound of the Pacific Northwest, or near the lake-filled prairies of Minnesota, and finally watching a pink sun fall below the Pacific Ocean as it burned the skies above the urban hub that is the Los Angeles basin. Almost every climate and every topographical feature known within North America was encountered. Equally as varied were the indigenous communities that were generous enough to open their doors and spend some time visiting. The amount of tribal associations receiving services at each of these sites is almost too numerous to count, but a rough estimate puts it at nearly eighty affiliations of America's First Nations who make regular use of these schools.

Yet, in spite of all the variation in location, language, custom, and natural settings, it was the commonalities shared by these institutions and their communities that feelings of *déjà vu* repeatedly emerged during these travels. At each one of these locations the processes that had birthed the alternative programs in operation there had unfolded in uncannily similar ways. Communities separated by thousands of miles arrived at very much the same conclu-

“  
**WHAT UNEXPECTEDLY EMERGED WAS A DISCERNIBLE EVOLUTIONARY PATTERN THAT DETAILED A PROGRESSIVE AND DEEPENING IMMERSION OF THE COMMUNITY WITHIN THE FUNCTIONS OF THEIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**  
”

sions and elected to take a course of action that paralleled each of the other sites – despite being separated by thousands of miles, and for some having developed into their current iterations during different time periods altogether. It was as though the same story, or some unspoken of script, had been passed along from one community to the next to be followed – despite there being any evidence that such communications or collaboration had in fact occurred. From here to there, from the deserts to the Rocky Mountains to the plains to the Pacific Ocean, the educational methods and the resulting practices – as shared at each place by the stories of their administrators – were eerie in their similarity.

When processing the experiences of these site visits during the construction of this work, a conscious effort was made towards being mindful about all the other American Indian communities – both urban and rural – who remain in desperate need of such alternative programming. For these folks, the local public school system is still their only option for formalized education, and for now they continue to watch this aged machine chew up and spit out their youth with little regard. With this in mind, an in-

tentional effort was made to identify any potential characteristics that were valued by the visited sites in the hopes that these elements would be of use to those communities still in need. Therefore, on behalf of students still at the mercy of the public education system and seemingly without recourse, identifying these valued characteristics could in some degree be replicated became a principle goal of this work.

What unexpectedly emerged was a discernible evolutionary pattern that detailed a progressive and deepening immersion of the community within the functions of their public schools. Traveling from location to location, a model was detected that was both familiar and that coincided with the state of alternative program development present within each urban setting. In this sense, a correlation could be drawn between the sophistication of the alternative, culturally-based educational methodologies being utilized within each urban setting with that of the level of community involvement within their local public school system. By illustrating this pattern of community immersion, it is the hope that the readership of this work will be able to self-identify where their community currently stands regarding this process, and what commensurate services could potentially be provided at that level or the next if they desired to move forward.

In addition to the detection of this evolutionary process, there were also several identifiable educational strategies employed by these sites that were, in essence, very much in common with what was being conducted across locations. These particular strategies had been deliberately crafted and implemented by the local American Indian community as a means of inculcating their

culture within the coursework and supporting their youth academically (which has now come to be commonly referred to as "indigenizing" educational practices). The fact that multiple indigenous communities living in disparate geographic locations

took the initiative to get involved, with all arriving at implementing similar educational approaches, suggests something larger than mere innovation born from need was occurring here. What could be derived from what was observed is the first composite

outlines of a unique indigenous pedagogy, initiated by need, but crafted through a unique process involving community discourse and the application of indigenous wisdom.

## The Trail Out of Darkness <sup>1</sup>

The road towards educational resurgence as undertaken by the visited sites was often marked by common touch points and similar occurrences, often times unfolding within a narrative arc resembling the stories told at each location. In general, there were essentially four phases of community immersion that could be identified which detailed an evolutionary process of deepening engagement with the local public school system. Here again, it is important to note that each phase occurred with varying degrees of intensity and for differing lengths in time – with some urban locations moving quite quickly through each step, and others perhaps transcending levels a bit slower on account of unique external circumstances. However, there remains a distinct sequencing associated with each phase that was common amongst all sites visited. Through a basic understanding of each level, it is the hope that other American Indian communities will be able to self-identify where they are at currently on this trail, and then anticipate what actions need to be taken in order to move forward and achieve the goals that they desire that have already been exemplified by these other locations.

What is most notable about this entire process of community immersion - as observed through the urban centers examined - is that it was invariably an endeavor created, initiated, and executed by the local American Indian community itself on its own behalf. There were never any "rescuers" who, appearing from outside the American Indian community, came in to "save" them. Contrary to their own ongoing misguided mythology relating to supporting student achievement, the public education system did nothing to alleviate their own shortcomings beyond cosmetic reforms and a harsh insistence that it was the students and the indigenous community who were failing within public schools. What has been brought to light by these communities is the inverse reality that the public education system had never really been designed to empower American Indian

students, and that since its inception was in essence performing perfunctorily in its acquiescence to the desired "Americanization" of the nation's youth.

Without a thought given towards seeking help from the outside, and no longer tolerant of giving the public school system itself any further credence than was necessary, the American Indian people within these cities united around the general concept that they themselves already possessed the answers needed to help their own. Operating within this central understanding, they elected to stand as the authors of the future they sought for their indigenous community and students. In every example offered within this work, it was the American Indian community stepping forward to take care of their own – motivated purely out of compassion and self-preservation. It was the community who envisioned a way by which a student's cultural identity could be further developed in concert with his schooling. Originating from the community itself was a new vision about how education *could be* that was brought into corporeal existence. This process - by which the community awoke, took control, and became involved – that the delineation of these phases aim to

define for others to follow.

These indigenous communities did not give up. They persisted. When their efforts were ignored or rejected by the system, they went on to create their own programs, even providing academic services outside within a city park where students and families both participated willingly. Through the determination and the sheer force of will exhibited by these urban American Indian populations, they were eventually able to start implementing fundamental changes to the dynamic within their home school districts. With or without support by the local school districts, these communities began operating their own supportive programs to help their youth. What they immediately identified and utilized was the strength and tenets of their own indigenous culture. They engaged other community leaders and elders to help deploy their shared vision, and collectively rallied around their students. After time, some local school districts came around to see the value of their work, and became amenable to partnering in an effort to collaborate towards a goal that both parties shared.

In this sense, the indigenous communities featured within this work actually illustrated that "local control" can in fact be a reality if it is willing to be struggled over and fought for. It will only manifest if the community insists upon exerting that control, and then actually pursues such measures in their own right - irrespective of official acknowledgement or consent from the public education system. Within the context of the urban sites examined here, the system never deferred to a prior acceptance that they would have to submit to the direction of the tax payers within their districts, nor did they provide guidance as to how the local population could exercise their influence over the system. Only after continuous, direct action was taken by the people to create the very change they sought did local districts and school boards eventually come around. These particular urban American Indian communities saw what needed to



**THESE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES DID NOT GIVE UP. THEY PERSISTED. WHEN THEIR EFFORTS WERE IGNORED OR REJECTED BY THE SYSTEM, THEY WENT ON TO CREATE THEIR OWN PROGRAMS, EVEN PROVIDING ACADEMIC SERVICES OUTSIDE WITHIN A CITY PARK WHERE STUDENTS AND FAMILIES BOTH PARTICIPATED WILLINGLY.**



<sup>1</sup> The following are excerpts drawn from the full text of *Resurgence: Restructuring Urban American Indian Education*

be done, and then went forward and did it. Within their stories presented here lies powerful examples as to how other communities – both native and non-Native alike – can take back their authority to help their children learn, grow, and succeed.

In an attempt to define and categorize this sequence of community immersion, the following classes were created: *Community Critical Mass*; *Community Support*; *Community Engagement*; and

*Community Driven*. As each urban locale progressed through these four stages, a series of newfound educational practices began to manifest – including the creation of community-governed alternative education programs, direct involvement of indigenous cultural teachings and perspectives, and a more sophisticated organizational approach towards ongoing interaction with the local public school system.



**The Seven Learnings Towards Indigenizing School Practices <sup>1</sup>**

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Learning Out-of-Doors (on Land &amp; on Water)</b>	<b>Learning In Community</b>	<b>Learning Across Generations</b>	<b>Learning in Redefined Spaces</b>	<b>Learning Leadership &amp; Advocacy</b>	<b>Learning Indigenous Language (Language Revitalization)</b>	<b>Learning Indigenous Cultural Practices</b>
This particular strategy emphasizes the need for students to directly engage with the surrounding natural environment during their time spent within a formalized educational setting.	This area focuses on the benefits of using relatively static cohort models within which students engage with curriculum and school activities throughout the entirety of their learning experience.	Students continually engage with community members from wide variety of age groups for the purpose of knowledge transmission and development of culturally appropriate socialization skills.	This particular learning centers upon the physical space and facilities within which students are to pursue their schooling.	Another common element within indigenized, alternative programs is their ongoing effort to develop leadership capabilities within each of their students, as well as providing instruction and opportunities to exercise these leadership skill sets through direct action and advocacy.	To remedy the growing disappearance of fluent indigenous language speakers, a renewed focus on language instruction has taken hold as an integral function of alternative, culturally-contextualized schooling.	This strategy captures all efforts related to the transmission of cultural knowledge from one person to the next within the day-to-day operations of the educational program, irrespective of age or academic capacity.

As stated previously within this section, another resulting product emerging from the site visits (and the in-depth conversations held therein) was a second intriguing pattern. A replication of pedagogical approaches - seemingly unknown as to be occurring at other locations - was clearly identifiable at each site in some form or another. This particular pattern pertained to the educational practices constructed and employed by the local indigenous community on behalf of their own students. Specifically, a repeated cluster of strategies were being used to varying degrees at each site to directly inculcate indigenous culture into the overall coursework and daily operations. The intent in doing so – as unwittingly mirrored by each community - was to provide direct support towards the development of the cultural identities of their students while simultaneously improving their academic achievement. At a minimum, roughly seven types of approaches could be identified as being employed at these alternative programs, with many characteristics of their application echoed throughout each site. To be clear, not all seven were completely in operation, or being realized to their fullest potential at every location. Some programs that were visited might have had evidence of multiple strategies within this cluster,

but perhaps not all seven were entirely present. Also, not every application of these seven strategies were as consistently robust or implemented as frequently from site to site. However, despite some of these subtle variations, there was a definite indication of at least seven strategies employed in some manner at each location.

For the purposes of this work, these applications have been referred to as *The Seven Learnings* – or seven approaches that were learned of during the course of the site visits. It was apparent that for each program, these particular learning strategies were held in high regard by their base American Indian community – hence their employment. These strategies were also believed to be deeply integral towards creating an indigenized educational model that would serve to reinforce and sustain the local indigenous culture, while simultaneously furthering the development of student's own personal cultural identities. Without any designation of importance, here are *the seven learnings* that were detected throughout the course of the site visits that have now been provided here with a brief descriptor.

## Section VI: Recommendations <sup>1</sup>

### Looking Forward, Recommendations, Next Steps

Life continues to move forward unabated. New students from the local indigenous communities across the country continue to line up each year, wearing tiny backpacks, shiny new shoes, and large smiles - all eager to begin their journey within America's public education system. As nervous parents surrender their progeny to the professional practitioners standing outside of brick buildings drenched in an early morning autumn sun awaiting their arrival, their minds are beset with the questions that all parents feel during such moments. *What will their child's time in school be like? How will their culture and family beliefs be received or even included within the classrooms that their little ones will sit in and learn? Will their children learn and grow in a manner that sustains their community*

*and honors the ways of their elders? Or will their journey mirror that which was endured by so many of the elders and ancestors of their families? Will these little ones also have to traverse a rocky path strewn with hardship, alienation, and cultural belittlement as a result of an unrelenting push for assimilation within the dominant culture? If trouble should arise, how receptive will this public school be towards meeting the needs of their child, or even listen to them if they begin to struggle? Just how much will the administration of these schools really work with parents or community leaders if they are approached with concerns about the system not meeting the needs of the people?*

Irrespective of how these questions might

be answered – as they will assuredly be answered differently from one state to another, from one district to another – today's urban indigenous communities in fact remain in a much more favorable position to implement reform than at any other time in history. One of the principle reasons this is true is due to the fact that they are in possession of a very powerful tool, an incredible gift that at first blanch would appear anything but. This leads to the first of five recommendations by this work, the call for urban American Indian populations to access and fully utilize this powerful tool that lies at their disposal. Once they do, they will have reset the current dynamic by placing themselves into a leadership role.



### Recommendation #1: Get and Use Educational Data from the Mainstream Public Education System

One of the most significant products of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB) was the perpetual collection and analysis of disaggregated data – for the first time detailing the academic achievements of specific cultural groups within the United States public education system. This data collection and analysis process has since become systematized by all public school districts, with each year new numbers being released to measure the overall efficacy of the work being done. To this end, the data relating to American Indian students (as well as students from nearly all communities of color) have been unquestionably abhorrent. Previous data during the close of the 20th Century had strongly indicated that American Indian students had fallen further behind their white counterparts. The NCLB data would go on to confirm this trend - and it also confirmed that very little had changed over the years despite the various public calls, federal reports, and internal attempts at systemic reforms. Since the disclosure of this evidence, these chronic disparities have been labeled as the "achievement gap" (or more recently as the "opportunity gap"). Each successive year, the annual data disclosures since NCLB's passage (as also included in Section II of this work) continue to illustrate the failings of the public school system towards educating and empowering

indigenous youth. This recurring data is, in fact, a gift for the American Indian people.

So long as these numbers remain dour, the system has no ability to assert its authority or "expertise" over the general community. Each year that this data reflects the failures of the system, the community retains an authentic right to assail the public education

to be allowed to "fix" the issue themselves by lamely trying to push the liquid back into the overturned glass with their hands, and then proceed to spill it all over again. Instead, America's public schools will have to challenge their own calcified hubris, and reorient themselves to a more subservient role of supporter – a supporter of innovation, a supporter of experimentation, a supporter of alternative approaches, and most importantly, supporter of community-governed initiatives rooted within that community's very own culture. Unless the data suggests different, the school system is in no position to argue that it is they – and they alone - who are best equipped to put the milk back into the glass.

In this sense, the abhorrent data points that are churned out by school districts across this country year after year can be used by urban indigenous communities as a form of talisman, a defensive shield protecting them from the ongoing subjugation of an unrelenting system - providing enough defilement to empower these communities to continue on pursuing alternative methodologies based on their culture. Additionally, this talisman can be wielded directly against their local public schools as a weapon to hold them accountable for chronic shortcomings and poor performance. If the public education system has the temerity to once again insist upon itself

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TWOFOLD: THIS DATA MUST BE  
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POSSIBLE FOR ALL PEOPLE, AND  
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ACROSS THE NATION MUST  
PROCURE AND ANALYZE THIS DATA  
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”

<sup>1</sup> The following are excerpts drawn from the full text of *Resurgence: Restructuring Urban American Indian Education*

as the only and best option to remedy the very problem that they are responsible for creating (which is their long-standing historical pattern of behavior), these indigenous communities will have no choice but to wield this talisman again and again against the schools, cutting through such delusional assertions and demanding that the community's preferred methodologies are implemented and reinforced. Although quite harsh to contend with upon first sight, the dissemination of performance data is in all reality an immeasurable gift for urban American Indian people. The recommenda-

tion is twofold: this data must be made as easily accessible as possible for all people, and American Indian communities across the nation must procure and analyze this data every year so that they will remain well-informed. Doing so will assuredly better equip them with the truth regarding the actual effectiveness of their public schools, and give them stronger footing upon which they can reassert their role as the real leaders of the system.

Once this data is utilized, indigenous communities will find that there already is a body of work operating in the field

today to which they can turn to for inspiration or replication. Hence another of the central purposes of this work – to spread the word about what is in fact possible, and how other people can begin to build their own alternative programming that is fully contextualized within indigenous culture. Perhaps by showcasing the work being done at the seven sites featured here, more urban indigenous communities will come out to make similar demands for reform – equipped with data and a variety of examples of working alternative models from which they could adopt.



### Recommendation #2: Need for More Financial Resources Right Now

This leads to the second recommendation. It is imperative to initiate or possibly accelerate the development of additional alternative educational models predicated on indigenous culture – but to do so with commensurate resources required to accomplish this task. What is abundantly clear, is the fact that these alternative methodologies need to be supported with far greater resources in order to broaden their work and deepen their positive impact on the students of the urban American Indian population. Owing to the historic and perpetual poor performance by the public schools with regards to the American Indian community, their students have been essentially voting with their feet regarding the efficacy of the district's efforts by walking out en masse. If it were not for these community-governed alternative programs, many would just keep walking.

In this sense, increasing investments by the district into these alternative programs would actually serve to protect established revenue streams by sustaining the per pupil income the district would earn by reducing the number of annual drop-outs. Since these programs are working in concert with their home districts, there is a natural fit for these school districts to allocate additional or supplemental resources to further advance the work being pursued at these sites. By investing additional monies into these programs, the district would in essence be working to shore up its own overall performance and utilization rates by the general public to whom they serve, and in partnership with these alternative programs, work towards keeping more American Indian youth in

school and achieving academically until graduation.

Additionally, there is an acute need for wider recognition and financial support for these existing alternative programs as offered by the philanthropic community. Too often, these alternative sites are limited by scant resources as provided through their relationships with local school district or through their charter. Typically, the local school district's resource allocations do not go beyond mandated payments for average daily membership, compensatory education dollars, and federal Title I and Title VII funding. Seldom do these financial resources meet the needs of the American Indian students who have chosen to enroll at these alternative sites. What has now become common practice for these programs is to do more with less on behalf of their students - stretching all of their programmatic dollars to their fullest potential. Compensation packages, curriculum renewal, professional development – all functions that must be considered to sustain the overall operations for these alternative sites – become increasingly difficult to fulfill as a result of the financial constraints placed on these sites. For those alternative programs who are adjoined to an indigenous non-profit, the non-profit experiences increased challenges towards procuring philanthropic support for day-to-day school operations as many in the philanthropic community prefer to fund outside of school activities, rather than what they feel is a supplanting of government dollars already dedicated for daily operations.

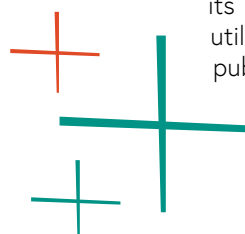
Further complicating the situation, the staff of these sites are typically stretched to the breaking point administering to the needs of their schools on shoe-string budgets. This



WHAT HAS NOW BECOME COMMON PRACTICE FOR THESE PROGRAMS IS TO DO MORE WITH LESS ON BEHALF OF THEIR STUDENTS - STRETCHING ALL OF THEIR PROGRAMMATIC DOLLARS TO THEIR FULLEST POTENTIAL.



makes coordinated and ongoing fundraising efforts an additional burden that many struggle to provide for. Yet another factor pertains to the fact that many of these alternative programs are under contract or are authorized by their home school district, so when the philanthropic community does engage with funding opportunities earmarked for educational purposes, the work being pursued within the indigenous communities is seldom mentioned, as it is typically overshadowed by larger, district-preferred projects. When educational pursuits specific to American Indian students are explored by members of the philanthropic community, these discussions almost exclusively revolve around the Title VII funded Indian Education Departments operating within each district (as discussed earlier, these departments are infrequently the drivers of innovative or alternative methodologies for indigenous youth). Philanthropic and public investments need to be broadened, purposefully, to also include community-based alternative education sites so that they too have a fair shot at procuring such additional funding.





### Recommendation #3: Need for New Educational Policies and Policy Reforms to Support These Efforts

A third recommendation pertains to enacting meaningful reforms to existing educational policies - or the creation of new policies - in an effort to provide assistance to these alternative programs. The purpose behind such reforms (or new policies) would be the deliberate deepening of the positive impact that these alternative, community-governed programs are having on urban American Indian communities, as well as to allow for greater replication by those indigenous communities still in need of such innovations. Examples include greater allowances for lateral pathways to teacher licensure, or an increase in the use of innovative program waivers to allow for both fast-tracking teaching licensures, or to allow non-licensed instructors to teach in tandem with licensed instructors. This would dramatically increase the amount of available the culture carriers of the local American Indian community – such as community elders - who could then enter into classrooms to teach language and other culturally-contextualized subjects unique to indigenous peoples. Additionally, for those school districts who have yet to explore contracted services with local indigenous non-profits (replicating the work being pursued by both Portland Public Schools and Minneapolis Public Schools) might be engendered with additional policy support at the local level.

Another important policy change consideration involves how indigenous students are identified. Following the lead of the recent work accomplished by Seattle Public Schools, a broadening of criteria defining how indigenous students are to be identified by school

### Recommendation #4: Need for Ongoing Convenings and Cross-Trainings of Practitioners Operating These Alternative Programs

REGULAR CONVENINGS OF THE LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATION SPECIALISTS WITHIN THE VARIOUS URBAN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, AN ONGOING VENUE FOR THE SHARING OF BEST PRACTICES AS IT RELATES TO THE UNIQUE SPACE OF COMMUNITY-GOVERNED ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION SHOULD BE CREATED.

FOLLOWING THE LEAD OF THE RECENT WORK ACCOMPLISHED BY SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, A BROADENING OF CRITERIA DEFINING HOW INDIGENOUS STUDENTS ARE TO BE IDENTIFIED BY SCHOOL PERSONNEL COULD LEAD TO BETTER SERVICES AND INCREASED RESOURCES FOR THE LOCAL DISTRICT.

personnel could lead to better services and increased resources for the local district. By disavowing a strict identifier along the lines of tribal membership or blood quantum (the latter generally accepted by most indigenous people as a foreign tool of genocide), districts should also consider descendance and lineage characteristics as well. By broadening the definitions in this way, the district will be able to provide greater access to services for all indigenous students present within their boundaries, as well as to allow districts to procure additional resources (such as federal dollars to provide these services to their now larger American Indian student population.)

The fourth recommendation calls for ongoing training and cross-community interaction between the various urban indigenous populations to empower each to learn from one another in regarding how they can engage with their public school district, assert local control, and to develop their own alternative academic programming. As discussed Section IV of this work, within each of the sites that were visited was evidence of a similar evolutionary journey that each community underwent as they sought to address the academic disparities affecting their youth. Roughly four phases of evolution could be detected, with each producing their own graduated sophistication of community-governed programming.

Through an ongoing series of professional development oppor-

tunities, as well as through regular convenings of the leadership and education specialists within the various urban indigenous communities, an ongoing venue for the sharing of best practices as it relates to the unique space of community-governed alternative education should be created. Additionally, through this same forum, an ongoing examination of new and innovative strategies

regarding civic engagement can be shared - potentially accelerating the evolutionary processes within each community as they gain new skills around community organizing and advocacy. Finally, the construction of a larger community centered on alternative indigenous education would most certainly be of value with regards to the establishment of comradery and the sustainment of morale.



### **Recommendation #5: Need to Further Examine and Explore the Applications of this Emerging Indigenous Pedagogy**

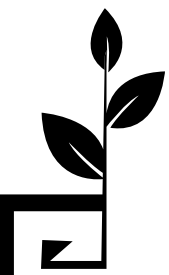
The fifth and final recommendation is to explore further the beginning precepts of the Indigenous Pedagogy that was evidenced at the sites examined within this work. What appears to have real merit and support by the people who are utilizing them, is a uniquely indigenous approach to formalized schooling that has successfully merged the tenets of the mainstream public school system (modern pedagogy, data-driven decision making, and student-centered curriculum) with that of traditional practices of the American Indian people. This approach, described in the previous section as *The Seven Learnings*, spoke of actual strategies used by urban American Indian people to teach their youth the ways of their culture and to instruct them in the standard content areas needed to successfully navigate the dominant culture. What makes these strategies successful is that they were created (in multiple locations separated by wide geographic distances) through the incorporation of the community's own belief systems as espoused by local leaders, parents, and elders. In this way, The Seven Learnings reflect the product of many community discussions around pedagogy and learning, the intent of many community convenings centered on inculcating culture within the classroom, and the spirit of many community gatherings to create ways in which their youth would feel supported and excited by learning. Owing to such authentic and ongoing interactions with their own respected leaders, the strategies that was generated (and inexplicably replicated in one way or another in other locations) suggests a powerful truth and honest effectiveness within each of these strategies. That being said, the further use and widespread dissemination of these approaches could potentially have a powerful and positive effect throughout Indian Country. At the very least, further study and conversations are warranted by all key stakeholders (leadership from the indigenous community, policy makers, professional educators, and members of the philanthropic community) - along with additional applications of this Indigenous Pedagogy.

In the final analysis, let this work be the latest addition to these historical community discussions. Let us all continue to critically assess the impact and nature of America's public education system, and ensure that local control

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is in fact an actual reality. Let us fully support those alternative programs already in service, that are so valued by the people who created and operate them so that they can continue on as well as to grow in size and impact. Let this work serve as a reference as to how local urban American Indian communities can self-start an evolutionary process whereby their actions, their desires, and their chosen approaches can serve as the catalyst to create alternative methodologies and alternative schools on their own for their own. Let details of common educational strategies employed by these communities serve as topics for additional examinations and refinements to further define just what an Indigenous Pedagogy is and how it can function. Let us all keep endeavoring to explore and implement the ways in which we choose to educate our young, and sustain our culture as indigenous people - as our teachers and students keep diligently working towards creating a future unencumbered by the mistakes of the past. Perhaps by working together, we will be able to truly reinvent the public education system to serve as an authentic mechanism to uphold democratic principles as arrived at by a multitude of diverse yet human cultures, honestly endorsed, supported through free will, and held accountable through intellectual appraisal.

“  
LET US ALL KEEP ENDEAVORING TO EXPLORE AND IMPLEMENT THE WAYS IN WHICH WE CHOOSE TO EDUCATE OUR YOUNG, AND SUSTAIN OUR CULTURE AS INDIGENOUS PEOPLE  
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The National Urban Indian Family Coalition would like to extend our deepest appreciation to the following organizations and individuals for their critical contributions to this publication:

**Joe Hobot**, Author

**Kevin Cherry**, Ph.D. student in Social Work & Social Research at Portland State University

*We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the community based organizations and school district staff who are working with great diligence, heart and ingenuity to transform the lives and educational outcomes of Native students in their cities:*

**Paul Lumley & Lisa Otero**

*Native American Youth and Family Center, Portland OR*

**Gail Morris**

*Seattle Public Schools Huchoosedah Indian Education Program*

**Joe Hobot**

*American Indian OIC, Minneapolis MN*

**Joseph Rice**

*The Nawayee Center School, Minneapolis MN*

**Kara Bobroff & Anpao Duta Flying Earth**

*Native American Community Academy, Albuquerque NM*

**Rose Marie McGuire**

*Denver Public Schools Indian Education Program*

**Marcos Aguilar & Minnie Ferguson**

*Semillas Community Schools, Los Angeles CA*

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Dr. Hobot is a descendant of the Hunk Papa Band of the Lakota Nation from the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. He was born and raised in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. He holds a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Minnesota, a Master's Degree from the University of St. Thomas, and a Doctorate of Education from Hamline University.

Dr. Hobot has worked at American Indian OIC since 2006. Prior to being named president and chief executive officer, he held the positions of lead teacher and director of education within the organization. In those roles, he was responsible for the effective oversight and progress of the agency's alternative high school, its Adult Basic Education/GED program, and its accredited career college.

Dr. Hobot also provides onsite instruction, professional development, and consultation for tribal governments and tribal administrations throughout Indian Country as an Adjunct Faculty member of the Falmouth Institute.

Dr. Hobot was appointed by Governor Mark Dayton to serve on the Minnesota Jobs Skills Partnership's board of directors. He is also a director on the boards of the Native American Community Development Institute, the Women's Environmental Institute, and the Greater Twin Cities United Way. He also chairs the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors group, and is a member of Equity Works - Minnesota. He was the 2015 recipient of the Minnesota American Indian Chamber of Commerce's Bear Award and was named a 2016 40 Under 40 honoree by the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal. Most recently, Dr. Hobot became a fellow through the Roy Wilkins Center for Human Relations and Social Justice at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.

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For a listing of the NUIFC member centers and additional information about urban Indians please visit our website at [WWW.NUIFC.ORG](http://WWW.NUIFC.ORG)

Or, contact Executive Director, Janeen Comenote at [jcomenote@nuifc.org](mailto:jcomenote@nuifc.org)

For more information on the sites highlighted in this report:

**NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAM**

Denver Public Schools  
1860 Lincoln St., 8th Fl  
Denver, CO 80203  
[IndianEducation.dpsk12.org](http://IndianEducation.dpsk12.org)  
(720) 423-2042

**HUCHOOSDAH INDIAN EDUCATION PROGRAM**

Seattle Public Schools  
2445 3rd Ave South  
Seattle WA 98124  
[seattleschools.org/academics/huchoosedah\\_indian\\_education](http://seattleschools.org/academics/huchoosedah_indian_education)  
(206) 252-0948

**NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITY Academy (NACA)**

1000 Indian School Rd NW  
Albuquerque, NM 87104  
[nacaschool.org](http://nacaschool.org)  
(505) 266-0992

**NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH & FAMILY CENTER (NAYA)**

Early College Academy  
5135 NE Columbia Blvd  
Portland, OR 97218  
[nayapdx.org/services/early-college-academy/](http://nayapdx.org/services/early-college-academy/)  
(503) 288-8177

**NAWAYEE CENTER SCHOOL**

2421 Bloomington Ave  
Minneapolis, MN 55404  
[centerschool.org](http://centerschool.org)  
(612) 721-1655

**TAKODA PREP OF AIOIC**

1845 E Franklin Ave  
Minneapolis, MN 55404  
[aioic.org/education-and-training](http://aioic.org/education-and-training)  
(612) 341-3358

**SEMILLAS COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**

Anahuacalmecac International University Preparatory  
4736 Huntington Drive South  
Los Angeles, CA 90032  
[dignidad.org](http://dignidad.org)  
(323) 352-3148

**“The grandfathers and the grandmothers are in the children; teach them well.”**

– Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) proverb

