



AMERICAN  
INDIAN  
COLLEGE  
FUND

## *Educating the Mind and Spirit*

### Important Dates in American Indian Education

- 1794** United States signs the first Indian treaty that includes provisions for federal funding of Indian education in exchange for tribal land.
- 1860** Federal government establishes the first federal Indian boarding school.
- 1892** Captain Richard Pratt declares it necessary to “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man” by removing children from reservations and inculcating in them “civilized” ways through education. Boarding schools became vessels for this educational philosophy for nearly a century longer.
- 1928** Merriam Report to Congress condemns government-run boarding schools for their failure to provide skills relevant to Indian youth.
- 1968** Navajo Nation establishes Navajo Community College, the nation’s first tribally-controlled college. It is later renamed Diné College.
- 1972** American Indian Higher Education Consortium formed by tribal colleges to undertake advocacy and development roles for the youthful institutions.
- 1972** Office of Indian Education established within the U.S. Department of Education.
- 1975** The Indian Self-Determination Act gives tribes (not government officials) authority to prioritize federal funds for education.
- 1983** Oglala Lakota College and Sinte Gleska College become first two tribal colleges accredited to offer bachelor’s degrees.
- 1989** American Indian College Fund begins disbursing scholarships to tribal college students.

# Facts About American Indian Education

## About American Indian Education

- American Indians living on rural reservations have limited access to higher education. One-third of American Indians live on reservations, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Nearly 26% percent of all American Indians and Alaska Natives live below the poverty line, contrasted with a national poverty rate of 12.4%. The gap is even larger for American Indians living on reservations, with 51% of the population living below the poverty line. Although the nation’s poverty rate dropped from 11.8% in 1999 to 11.3 % in 2000 (the lowest in 21 years), the poverty rate for American Indians and Alaska Natives did not drop. *Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Indian Affairs.*
- The federal government provides some assistance to tribal colleges, but higher education generally is not provided by the government and remains unaffordable to most American Indian people. Although 77% of American Indian and Alaskan Native eighth-graders surveyed said they plan to go to college, Native people are still the minority in higher education, accounting for only 1% of total enrollment in colleges and universities.
- American Indian/Alaska Native student enrollment in colleges and universities more than doubled in the past 30 years, and the number of associate’s, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees conferred to Natives doubled over the past 25 years. Although the number of Natives attending college is growing, American Indian/Alaska Natives were less likely to earn a bachelor’s degree or higher than their non-Native peers. *Sources: National Center for Education Statistics, “Status and Trends in the Education of American Indians and Alaska Natives, 2008;” National Congress of American Indians, 2006; National Center for Education Statistics, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, and 2005 National Indian Education Study.*
- College graduates are more prosperous. A person who has earned a bachelor’s degree earns 60% more than a high school graduate. Over a lifetime, the gap in earning potential between someone with a high school diploma and another with a bachelor’s degree is more than \$800,000. *Source: 2007 College Board study.*

## About Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)

- Today the TCUs serve approximately 31,000 students. *Source: AIHEC AIMS Report 2009.*
- TCUs operate on or near Indian reservations, providing access to higher education for those who cannot move in order to attend college.
- Tribal colleges are fully accredited institutions that must meet the same rigorous academic standards as other colleges and universities in their states, and also provide cultural instruction.
- There are 33 accredited TCUs in the United States offering degree and vocational education programs. *Source: AIHEC AIMS Report 2009.*
- TCUs offer a total of 635 different undergraduate majors/programs. Fifty-five majors are bachelor’s degree programs, four are master’s degree programs, 387 are associate degree programs, and 178 are vocational programs leading to a certificate. Nearly 12 percent of tribal college students are enrolled in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programs. *Source: AIHEC AIMS Report 2009.*
- The American Indian College Fund supports programs at TCUs that promote cultural and language preservation, traditional leadership, and other curricula that build strong communities and future leaders.

- 1989** Sinte Gleska University becomes the first tribal college to offer a master's degree.
- 1991** Indian Nations At Risk Task Force report sees needs for more Indian student financial aid, more Native teachers and a national database of Indian education.
- 2001** The Sovereign Nations Scholarship Fund Endowment (SNSFE) was established by and for American Indians with a gift of \$900,000 from the Shakopee Mdewakanton Dakota Sioux Community to establish a permanent endowment supported by American Indian nations, Native-owned businesses, foundations, and individual donors. The endowment provides scholarships to American Indian students in perpetuity. The scholarships are available to students of any major, undergraduate, graduate, or professional school who are attending either tribal colleges or mainstream universities.
- 2004** American Indian College Fund expands its financial aid to support tribal college faculty at the Ph.D. level.
- 2007** The Lilly Endowment Inc. provided an historic five-year, \$17.5 million grant to the American Indian College Fund. The initiative, titled Woksape Oyate, Lakota for "Wisdom of the People," aims to build the intellectual capital of tribal colleges. It will allow diverse tribal colleges to tailor their programs to address individual needs, while simultaneously strengthening the entire tribal college system.
- 2009** The American Indian College Fund celebrates its 20th anniversary.



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## About the American Indian College Fund

- The American Indian College Fund began operations in 1989 and in 2008-09 provided 6,208 scholarships. *Source: American Indian College Fund data.*
- The American Indian College Fund is the largest private national scholarship provider for American Indians, and has provided more than 70,000 scholarships since its founding in 1989.
- Since 1989, more than 130,000 individuals, corporations, foundations, and tribal nations have made contributions to the Fund. *Source: American Indian College Fund data.*
- Besides scholarships, the Fund supports capital projects, cultural preservation efforts, and public education.
- The top five areas of study for American Indian College Fund scholarship recipients are, in order of size: business; general studies; health; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and education.
- The Fund earned the "Best in America Seal of Excellence" from the Independent Charities of America. Of the one million charities operating in the United States, fewer than 2,000 organizations have been awarded this seal.
- The Fund meets the Standards for Charity Accountability of the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance.
- The American Indian College Fund spends 82.4% of its funds on programs, 12% on fundraising, and 5.6% on management and general expenses.

## About Our Students

- The average per capita income on reservations is \$8,000, making the seemingly affordable tribal college tuition of \$4,000 per year a distant dream for American Indian students. *Source: U.S. Census Bureau Report: 2000 and Poverty and Money in the United States: 2000.*
- The majority of first-time entering degree-seeking American Indian students are between 16-24 years of age. *Source: American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2009.*
- About half of scholarship recipients continued their education after completing their first degree at a tribal college and university (TCU). Of those, 86% pursued a bachelor's degree, 16 percent pursued an associate's degree, and 17 percent pursued a master's degree. *Championing Success: A Report on the Progress of Tribal College and University Alumni, prepared by the Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2006.*

## We Are Often Asked...

### If tribal casinos are so successful, why aren't they sharing the wealth?

- Tribal nations *are* sharing with poorer neighboring tribes and communities, and they *are* contributing to the success of TCU students. However, you might not hear about these donations in the media because in most American Indian cultures it is impolite to draw attention to good deeds. At the Fund, we enjoy the support of tribes and entities including the National Indian Gaming Association, the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, the Barona Band of Mission Indians, and more. *Source: American Indian College Fund data.*
- According to U.S. law, Indian tribes are sovereign nations with jurisdiction over their own affairs. To ask one tribal nation to share its revenue with another would be akin to asking the state of Delaware to give its tax revenue to the state of Hawai'i. Yet tribes do share.
- It is a popular misconception that casinos generate tremendous wealth. Only a handful of Indian casinos generate large revenues. Many state laws require that percentages of gaming revenues go to the state, such as Oregon, which requires a percentage of gaming revenues be paid to the state to support nonprofit organizations incorporated there. Tribes have mandates that require that a percentage of revenues fund tribal government services, economic and community development, and general tribal welfare before it allots revenues to individual tribal members. *Source: National Indian Gaming Association.*