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*Tribal College and University
Early Childhood Education Initiatives:*
Helping Native-serving early learning centers blossom

Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz, American Indian College Fund
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

Early Childhood Development In Indian Country: *Strategies for tribal communities to enhance the well-being of their youngest members*

Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

October 6, 2016

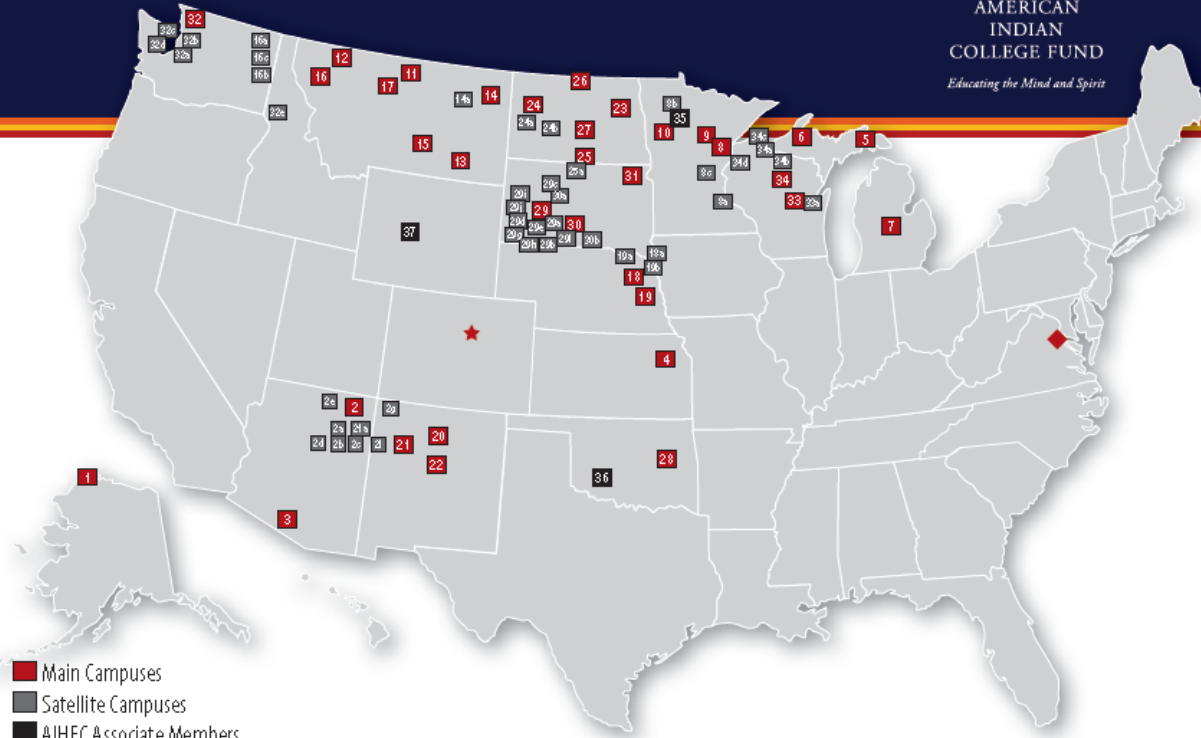
TCU Profile: Early Childhood Education Programs

Tribal Colleges and Universities Map

The American Indian College Fund received scholarship applications from students in 48 states in 2013–14 and serves 34 tribal colleges and universities at 77 campus locations in the United States.



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Educating the Mind and Spirit



- Main Campuses
- Satellite Campuses
- AIHEC Associate Members

TCU ECE Initiatives:



Ké' Early Childhood Initiative:

STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS OF SHARED RESPONSIBILITY
WITH FAMILIES, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES



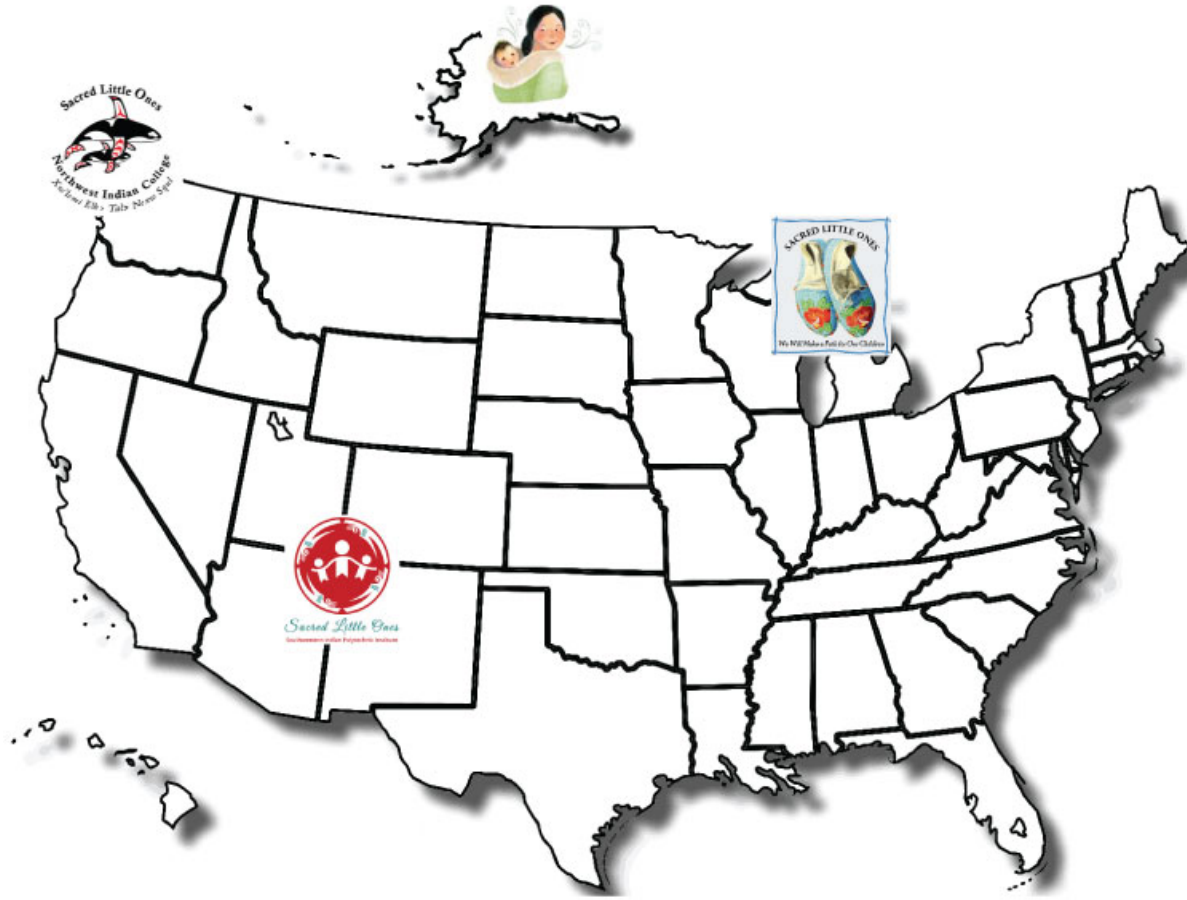
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RESTORATIVE TEACHINGS

An Early Childhood Education Initiative

Wakanyēja ECE Initiative



Collective strategy of educational change



TCU Early Childhood Education Initiative Vision & Theory of Change

“The educational sovereignty of tribal nations is rooted in their cultures and languages and is enacted throughout the systems and structures of the tribes, emphasizing traditional knowledge and learning. Educational sovereignty recognizes the right of Tribes to socialize their own children and supports parents and extended families as the foundation of children’s education. With the support of tribal governments, relationships between institutions, children, their families, and their communities are seamless. **Tribal Colleges and Universities lead restorative collaborations inclusive of community-based participatory research, educator training, curriculum development, and tribally-appropriate assessment.**”

(TCU ECE Strategic Planning Committee, June 2013)



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Levels of Inquiry

- TCU ECE student (i.e., increased learning opportunities and engagement for TCU ECE students)
- Individual early learning classroom (i.e., instructional practices)
- Children's learning opportunities (i.e., collection of children's work and increased culture-based and language-rich learning opportunities)

Individual Level

- TCU teacher education degree program (i.e., revisions to existing program curriculum and development of new courses and practicum experiences)
- Early Learning Center (i.e., center-wide practices and trainings focus on the five domains of the initiative)
- TCU institution (i.e., impact on institutional change and development of leaders as a result of the project)

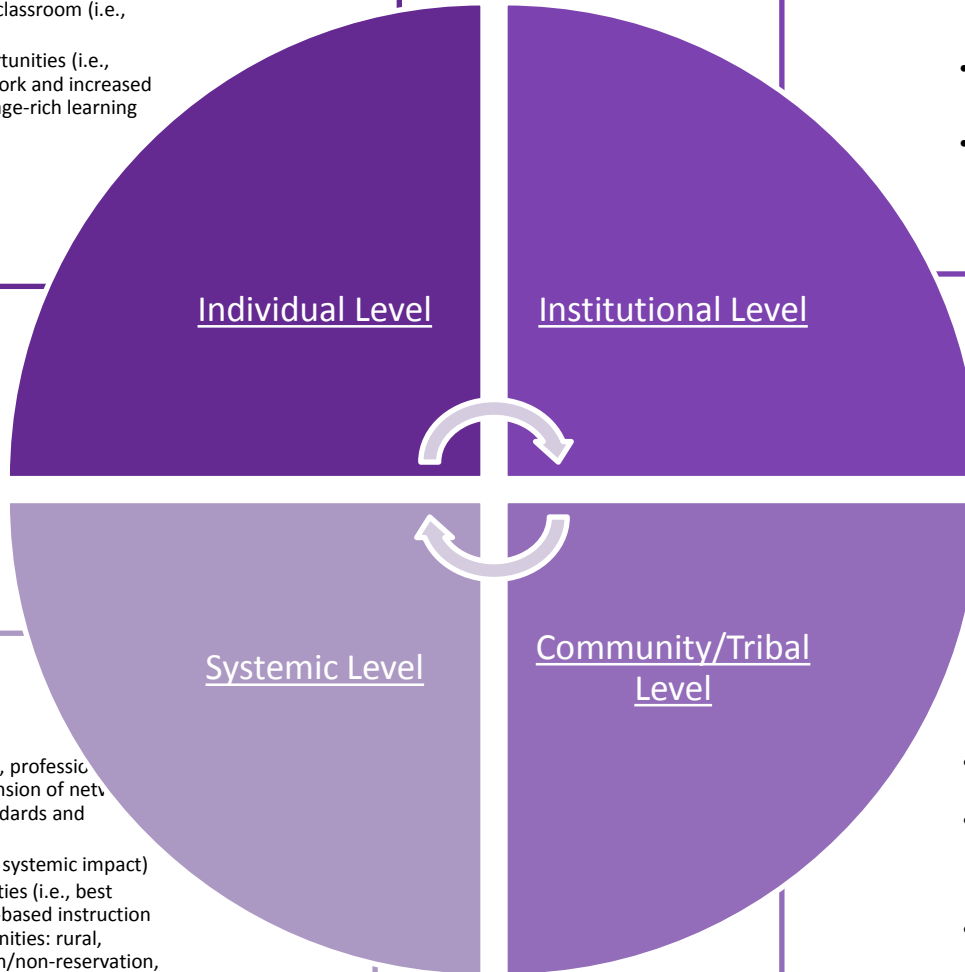
Institutional Level

- Pre-K-to K-12 Education (i.e., professional learning communities, expansion of networks across systems, such as standards and accrediting organizations)
- Across TCU institutions (i.e., systemic impact)
- Across inter-tribal communities (i.e., best practices in ECE and culture-based instruction across diverse tribal communities: rural, suburban, urban, reservation/non-reservation, international)

Systemic Level

- Home-to-school (i.e., family and community engagement)
- Tribal community (i.e., engagement with tribal leadership, elders, culture and language commissions)
- Locally-driven inquiry, prioritizing key areas of need identified by the community/families/tribe

Community/Tribal Level



Wakanyeja Five Domains

- Increase cognitive and non-cognitive skill development by implementing best practices and research-based knowledge aligned with:
- Family & Community Engagement and Empowerment
- Native Language and Culture
- Increase teacher and instructional quality
- Address Pre-k to K-3 transition: School readiness



Improvement of early childhood teacher quality

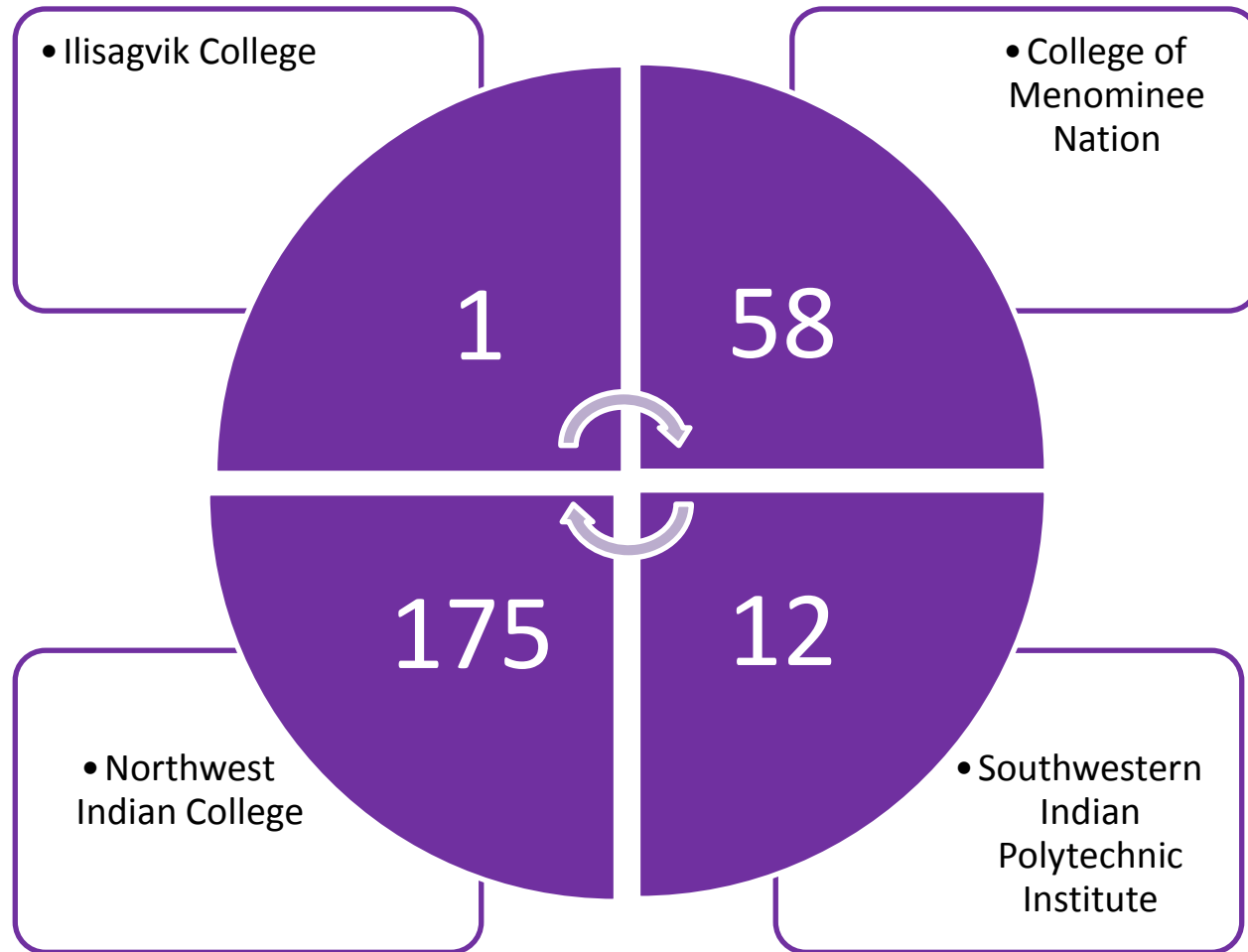
“This ambitious project not only helped preservice Teacher Education students, Pre-K and primary classroom teachers but also moved to a strong focus on parents understanding and appreciating how their child’s Menominee (tribal) culture contributes to the child’s learning.” (CMN Annual Report, 2015, p.13)



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Numbers of teachers “trained”



Empowering families and communities



Improve children's development



Language & Literacy

- Improved culture-based instruction
- Cultural books
- Informational books
- Literacy-rich parent engagement



Numeracy

- Counting in different languages
- Culture-based concepts of counting
- Concepts of time (seasonal and cultural calendars)
- Sorting shapes and numbers with culturally relevant manipulatives



Socio-emotional development

- Large and small group learning
- Culture-based stories about relations with each other and with the natural world
- Parent engagement in play nights



Fine & Gross Motor

- Learning to dance & "hunt"
- Culture-based play nights
- Learning to sew
- Learning to draw, paint, and write
- Culturally-relevant games



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Bridging early childhood and K-3 education, and beyond

“In Year 1 and 2 SIPI established relationships with families who were involved in the initiative. In Year 3 relationships were established with 3 families who provided report cards for their children during kindergarten. In Year 4 SIPI began to develop relationships with children who had experienced the cultural curriculum at the YDI site for two years. In Year 5 SIPI solidified relationships with transitioning children who had now experienced the curriculum for 3 years. SIPI also provided various interactive and informative workshops for parents throughout the year.” (SIPI Annual Report, 2015, p. 3)



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Native language(s) and culture(s)



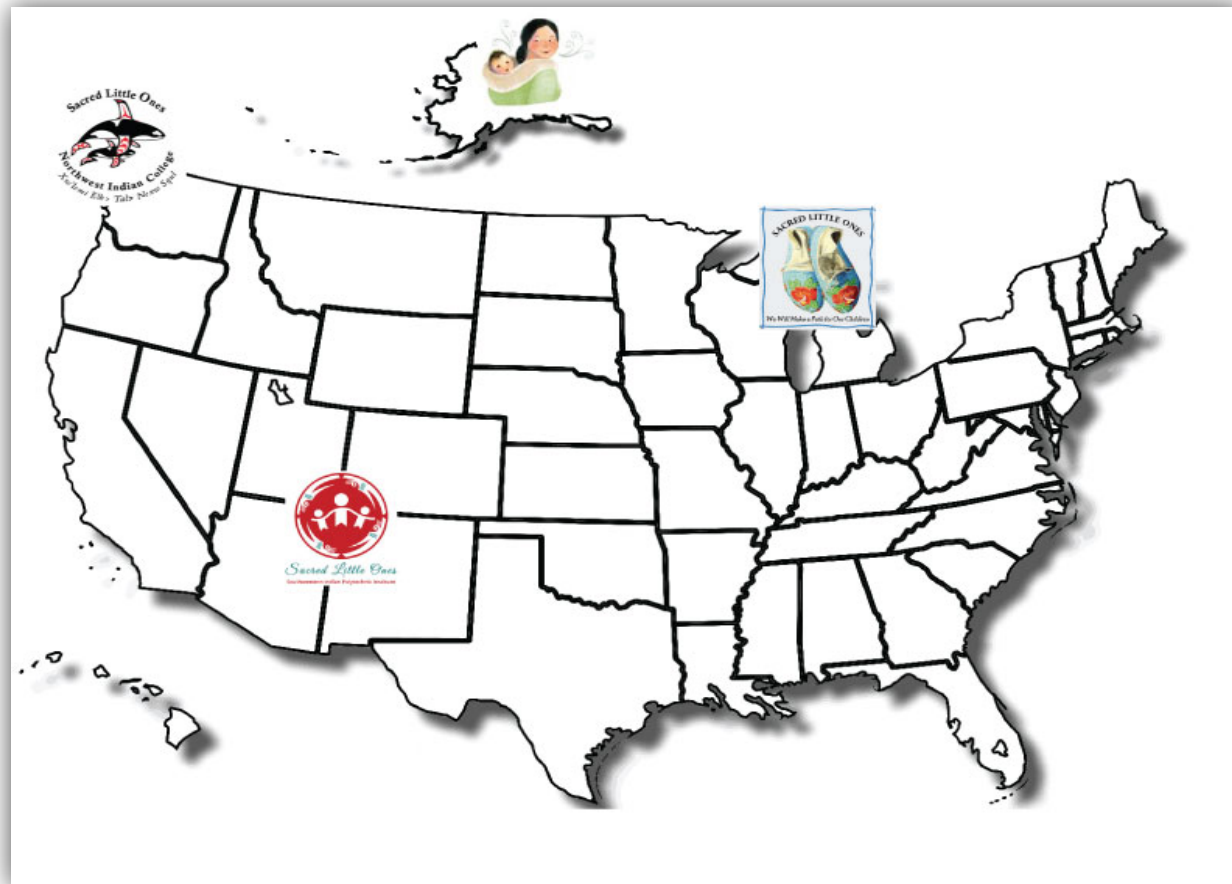
- Engage in collaborative vision, planning, implementation, evaluation, and reflection toward sustainability
- Lead with informed responsibility and engage in generous reciprocity
- Understand that Native culture- and language-based education is much more than material outcomes and resources
- Inherent in educational practices emergent from Indigenous/Native theories are different frameworks, protocols, lens, tools and measures
- Teams and members must be adaptive, responsive to dynamic changes, and persistent in creative thought
- Do not fear cultural protocols as barriers to progress – cultural protocols are protective and restorative practices that must be fully engaged and honored



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Living our stories: Metaphors and impact for generations to come



Thank you!

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