

Cook Inlet Tribal Council Proposal to the Department of Education & Early Development on Culturally Relevant Schools for Alaska Native and American Indian Students

Solution:

Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc. proposes a partnership with the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to conduct a Native education model analysis. CITC will present the final proposal in the form of a plan on these education models. CITC is uniquely qualified for this work based on our radical new learning models to include digital badging, fab labs, culture camps, and innovation stations. This project is the next step in determining alternative education models for Alaska Native and American Indian students in Alaska. The work will involve stakeholder representatives of Alaska's 229 tribes, through a series of consultations regarding the opportunities and readiness for furthering Native education. Culturally relevant Native education would have a robust effect on increasing the resilience of Alaska's education system and outcomes for Alaska Native and American Indian students and, indeed, for all students. This work will also continue to strengthen the ongoing relationship of the Alaska Native community with DEED.

Alaska Native organizations have the ability to address the traumatic impacts of the current education system on Alaska Native students and families in a culturally relevant manner given adequate resources to determine how greater Alaska Native organizational involvement can address the disparities in academic achievement of Alaska Native students. Additionally, Alaska Natives have traditional values that make them uniquely qualified to establish supports that address resiliency skills, emotional safety, community connectedness, and emotional regulation.

Plan:

Culturally relevant schools will create a paradigm shift in public education that generations of Native students have not seen. In accordance with Alaska's constitution, these schools will be public schools that are open to all students, Native and non-Native alike. These schools should follow DEED's content standards as required; however, pedagogy and teaching methods will be embedded with culturally relevant content.

The purpose of this proposal is to determine the best ways to further Alaska Native involvement in Alaska public education through chartering and other models with the long-term goal of removing the barriers to improving outcomes for Alaska Native students altogether: barriers such as language and cultural differences; unfamiliarity with Native cultures among teachers and other school staff; curriculum, learning materials, and teaching methods that do not relate to Alaska Native cultural experiences; and standardized tests that do not take into account language and cultural differences. These are but a few of the obstacles Native students face in the current education model. With intentional, effective programming from kindergarten through 12th grade targeted at each developmental level, and with necessary supports that lead to academic success like culturally responsive scaffolding, school climate and connectedness, and addressing out of school barriers that impede academic success with wraparound family services, a new model of Alaska Native education in K-12 schools in Alaska will prepare Alaska Native and non-Native students to live and work where they are and not to live where they work.

CITC proposes an 18-month project to develop grounded, culturally relevant education models for Alaska Native and American Indian student education in rural Alaska, first class cities, and Alaska's urban centers. CITC, along with a wide variety of stakeholders, will meet with communities, school boards, school personnel, educational stakeholders, statewide Alaska Native organizations, parents, and students to determine the best educational models to move Alaska Native and American Indian students in Alaska towards a positive path to career/college ready life. CITC proposes four primary activities to inform the project:

1) Develop Community Survey: With the Commissioner and the Tribal Liaison, CITC will develop a survey of general and targeted questions to be used during the community work sessions.

2) World Build Design Collaboration: Before beginning the community work sessions, CITC is proposing to lead three different world build exercises collaborating with many different stakeholder groups, i.e. rural and urban school districts, charter schools, community educational leaders, culture bearers, etc., to assist in the research that is needed to begin visioning the future of education in the State of Alaska. This research starts with gathering information and data prior to hosting a "Kalaka" workshop where various lenses are created by the stakeholder groups based on themes that emerge during the information gathering phase. These lenses inform how the groups would view the future world and bring focus to the research and analysis. Once these lenses are determined and validated by the stakeholders, the "Kalaka" workshops are held and are guided by predetermined provocations which are designed to assist stakeholders to create a vision of education for the future.

3) Community Work Sessions: CITC will organize a sequence of community work sessions throughout Alaska to engage in a dialogue on how to shape the future of Alaska's K-12 educational model to ensure better outcomes for Alaska Native and American Indian children. CITC envisions approximately 15 work sessions, held across geographically diverse areas of the state, bringing together an inclusive array of Tribal leaders, school board members, students, parents, community members, and possible the DEED Tribal Liaison. CITC will both contract with an educational consultant and assemble an Advisory Group to participate in the team engaging in these conversations, which will include alternative education models for K-12 schools.

As part of this activity, CITC and the education consultant will use the survey developed in conjunction with the department, to work within the community meetings to honor, scale, and expand the current innovative work happening within our schools, including projects such as language nests, existing charter schools, partnerships within school districts, fab labs and innovation stations, and other relevant efforts.

4) Report Educational Models and Recommend Priorities: Led by the educational consultant who participated in the community work sessions, CITC staff and Advisory Group members will synthesize the content of work sessions in order to develop an innovative plan to DEED that includes strategic priorities and recommended education models for values-based K-12 public education in Alaska.

Project Timeline

Activity	Responsible Party	Timeline
Contract with Educational Consultants	CITC Sr. Special Proj. Manager	Month 2
Create Advisory Group	CITC Staff	Month 3
Charter School Consultation	CITC Staff, Educational Consultant 1	Month 3-12
Conduct Community Work sessions	CITC Staff, Educational Consultant 2, Advisory Group	Month 3-15
Develop Report on Educational Models for AN/AI Student Success	CITC Staff, Educational Consultants, Advisory Group	Month 15-18
Submit Report to DEED	CITC Sr. Special Proj. Manager	Month 18

Deliverable:

Culturally relevant education models outlining traditional Native methods to educate Alaska Native and American Indian students in rural Alaska, first class cities, and urban centers.

Parental input will be considerable in the community/regional work sessions as well as in any education model proposed to DEED, as will student voices. These activities will be tribal, parent- and community-centric. Success in school is dependent upon personal history. If parents and communities are involved in the local school, the likelihood is greater that excellent educational goals will be the end result. To bring about meaningful change, schools and communities will engage in shared leadership and schools will share decision-making with the community. These steps build greater trust and strong connections are made between school staff and parents.

Budget:

Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) was created in 1983 as a private, tribal 501(c)3 social services non-profit with the mission *To work in partnership with Our People to develop opportunities that fulfil Our endless potential*. CITC pursues this mission through five core service departments: Recovery Services, Child & Family Services, Youth Empowerment Services, Employment & Training Services, and Alaska's People, the state's premier job placement agency for indigenous people.

Budget:	18 Month Total
A. Personnel – Project Manager & Admin Support	\$125,000
B. Fringe at 38% - FICA, ESC, Health & Life Insurance, W/C, 401(k)	\$47,500
Subtotal Personnel	\$172,500
C. Travel – Regional Working Sessions 15-20 @ \$4500 for Contractors and CITC staff	\$80,000
D. Supplies – Office Supplies and Working Session Supplies	\$41,152
E. Contractual – Education Consultants, Advisory Committee, World Build Design, Report	\$500,000
F. Other – CITC Office Space and IT Support Services	\$27,459
Total Direct	\$821,111

Indirect – 34.05 % for all services minus Contractual	\$109,339
Pass - Through Indirect – 13.91% for Contractual Services	\$69,550
Total Project Cost	\$1,000,000

CITC manages over 50 grants and contracts from agencies including SAMHSA, the IHS, Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Education, US Department of Labor, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and multiple State of Alaska Departments, as well as private funding streams and maintains a state-of-the-art Accounting Department with more than 17 years of unmodified independent annual audits. Independent audits are conducted by a third-party CPA firm in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in Government Auditing Standards, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations. CITC maintains policies for procurement and contract management that provide detailed effective practices for management of grant activities.

Table 1: % proficient or advanced 2019 PEAKS Math Assessments		
<i>Sub group</i>	<i>4th grade</i>	<i>8th grade</i>
<i>AN/AI: Alaska</i>	22%	12%
<i>All: Alaska</i>	45%	28%
<i>White: Alaska</i>	60%	39%

Abstract:

A history of chronic disparity in educational attainment between Alaska Native and American Indian students and their non-Native peers impacts students across Alaska. Alaska Native and American Indian students for decades have been standing at the classroom door looking in. Proposing alternative education models with culturally relevant curriculum and strategies for Alaska Native and American Indian students will provide for a way into the classroom for students and improve outcomes. In the long-term, the work proposed in this application will lead to high-quality culturally significant education for Alaska schools in addition to building the necessary foundation for social and emotional learning for Alaska Native, American Indian, and all students who attend these schools. These education models will be relevant for students in rural villages, first class cities, and urban centers alike.

While standardized assessments exist to measure student achievement, they are one small benchmark in a student’s journey; however, they can carry with them an indignity for years to come. According to the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development’s website (AKDEED), a little over 15% of Alaska Native and American Indian 4th graders tested at the proficient or advanced level in language arts on the 2019 Statewide PEAKS Assessment and in the same year, nearly 22% of Alaska Native and American Indian students scored proficient or advanced in math. Statewide assessment for 8th grade students in language arts, 15% of Alaska Native and American Indian students scored proficient or advanced, while 12% in math were at or above proficiency as shown in Table 1. Outcomes in both categories are trending downward.

The same data from the department’s website (AKDEED) shows Alaska Native and American Indian students have a dropout rate nearly double of students statewide - 5.7%

and 3.0% respectively, but they are faring better when it comes to graduating at a rate of 67.55% in the 2019-2020 school year, while the overall Alaska student graduation rate in the same year was 79.04%.

In order for this proposal to be successful, it is essential that leadership statewide be prepared to help stakeholders understand the long-term nature of this innovative project. For 35 years, Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc. (CITC) has engaged in improving the educational outcomes of Alaska Native students using alternative models and technology.

CITC is the regional Alaska Native non-profit organization providing education and social services to the Alaska Native population of Anchorage, where 26% of Alaska's total Alaska Native population resides. With a leadership that is strongly reflective of our service population (our 17-member Board of Directors, President/CEO, Executive Vice President/Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operating Officer, General Counsel and Chief Administrative Officer are Alaska Native), CITC provides key services to meet the needs of Native people living in Alaska's largest urban setting.

Summary:

A proposal to address the gaps in educational needs for Alaska Native and American Indian students is key to promoting self-sufficiency. Whether the model is tribal chartering or another model of culturally relevant education of public K-12 schools in Alaska is without a doubt an innovative approach in contrast to the current education model. Schools impart values to their students that shape the future of communities. Schools are also crucial for building the human capital necessary to advance the economic conditions in communities.

In Alaska, we value local control of education and educational choice. Culturally relevant schools would be instruments that fulfill these important roles while honoring the commitment to advance meaningful self-determination policy for Native students. Schools designed by local communities and Alaska Native people will be more culturally responsive, with a focus on developing tribal citizens who can meet the future demands of the 21st century.

Cultural relevance for K-12 education is not a new idea to Alaska, but an overdue one. It is an innovative idea discussed at the local level for years presented formally during Alaska's Education Challenge in 2017 by the Tribal & Community Ownership Committee as well as at the University and statewide Alaska Native conventions and meetings. The conviction that local communities are best situated to address the educational needs of their students is foundational to Alaska's system of education. Accordingly, if Tribes have greater ownership and local control over education, student outcomes in their communities will improve. As a result, all Alaskan students, and their communities, will benefit from having access to this additional, innovative educational pathway.

This project is one step towards creating leverage in local communities to advocate for ways to implement culturally relevant schools for Alaska Native students.