



**CENTER FOR NATIVE  
AMERICAN YOUTH**  
AT THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

## **Policy and Resource Roundtable:**

Youth Perspectives on Employment Opportunity

*June 23, 2017*

9:00am - 12:00pm

### KEY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

- In order to achieve success, tribal youth employment programs must be grounded in culture and youth identity.
- Rather than focusing on skill-building at one point in youth development, tribes should build systems that support youth from cradle-to-career and identify strategies to track outcomes at each stage of their life.
- Tribes and tribal organizations must create innovative practices whereby talent is not only developed but retained.
- Tribes need tools to develop meaningful data that tells the real story about their community's challenges and opportunities.
- Tribes and tribal organizations must prioritize developing career pathways in disciplines necessary for the tribes' future success.
- Workforce development in Indian Country must create self-sufficient citizens to help bolster tribal self-determination.
- Native youth need better resources that expose them to a variety of careers, help them navigate their options, and showcase Native professionals in those careers so they can relate to their future.

### CENTER FOR NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH

- Opening remarks by **Senator Dorgan (ret.)**.
  - There is not enough energy or resources being spent on developing holistic and culturally appropriate youth workforce development pathways.
  - Workforce development is not only an economic issue, but an issue of education and extracurricular importance as well.
  - We must work together to address these problems, rather than just stay in our silos.

NATIVE YOUTH ADVOCATE: **CODY PEONE, COEUR D'ALENE TRIBE**

- **Highlights:**
  - Native youth need to be afforded the opportunity to test the waters and determine which career and educational pathways are best for them. Without the ability to engage with different work experience during their formative years, Native youth will feel pigeonholed into work pathways unfit for their success.
  - It is crucial that Native youth receive career and education opportunities that weave their culture into their work experience, providing them a springboard for further professional and educational development.
- **Background on Cody:**
  - Cody was raised with the help of his grandmother, Norma Peone, a higher education professional.
  - Being raised by a higher education professional instilled in Cody the sense that he would go on to study in college, but as a young high schooler he did not know specifically what he wanted to study.
  - In his first summer with Coeur d'Alene's youth employment programming, Cody worked with young children, between the ages of 3-5, in the hopes of moving towards being a math teacher.
  - Although his time working with children was meaningful, it made it clear to him that he had no wish to be a teacher. So, yet again, he was in the position of not knowing what road he would follow but knew he had Coeur d'Alene's programming to look forward to.
  - In his second summer with Coeur d'Alene's programming, Cody worked with his hands with facilities and found that the job was more to his liking than his previous summer but still found it lacking.
  - Finally, during his third summer in Coeur d'Alene's programming, Cody worked in Lake Management and loved it. Here he was able to protect both his culture as well as his home's natural equilibrium. Cody appreciated that he was able to work both outdoors and in an office, ensuring that his Nation's lands and traditions were being protected.
  - The very same summer, Cody took a Tribal Law course at a local college and was exposed to the legal framework that brought about the desecration of his Nation's lakes and natural resources.
  - Presently, Cody is working for Lake Management for a second summer and plans on studying Environmental Engineering once he graduates next year.
  - Without being able to try out different career paths, Cody would never have known about environmental engineering, nor that he had such passion for it.
- **Reaching out to Native youth:**

- Being raised by a passionate higher education professional, Cody knows that he was exposed to conversations and resources surrounding youth employment and career pathways that others in his community were not.
- Coeur d'Alene's pipeline programming aims to sew these conversations into the fabric of life in Coeur d'Alene's communities.
- Being able to have easy access to, and regular conversation about, workforce development pathways allows Native youth the time and support necessary to plan their own pursuit of employment, education, and fulfilling professional lives.
- Cody wants everyone in Coeur d'Alene to feel as if they live in a community that fosters their development and supports their life goals, allowing them to flourish instead of just get by.
- Cody believes that Coeur d'Alene's youth workforce programming has taken an important step forward in giving Native youth more opportunities and educational support.

TRIBAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE: **DR. CHRIS MEYER, COEUR D'ALENE TRIBE – DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

- **Highlights:**
  - Coeur d'Alene's workforce development programming takes a multidisciplinary approach to engaging with issues of employment, ranging from education to economic development, to behavioral health services. It is this multipronged approach that makes it so successful and so impactful for not only Native youth, but the Coeur d'Alene Tribe writ large.
  - Coeur d'Alene's pipeline offers the tribe ways to meaningfully measure the gaps in their workforce and educational programs.
  - Coeur d'Alene's programming helps facilitate the tribe's partnerships with nearby colleges and universities, ensuring their youth are being trained and educated in areas of *need* for the tribe. Furthermore, some of these colleges and universities apply for grants benefitting the tribe. All such grants must be cleared by the Department of Education to ensure the efficacy and relevance of these grants to the tribe.
  - The pipeline programming has continued to grow and offers Native youth opportunities for personal, professional, and educational growth. Coeur d'Alene is successfully working towards educating and training their next generation of teachers, administrators, scientists, and professionals.
- **Coeur d'Alene's Workforce Development Pipeline:**

- Coeur d'Alene developed a "map" outlining the opportunities, grants, and programming available to their youth from birth to career. These opportunities encompass Head First, collegiate partnerships, and internship programming to name a few.
- This programmatic map has allowed the tribe to identify gaps in their programming and better understand where they need to seek or allocate funding.
- Additionally, this map affords the tribe the ability to see where they need further research and data. Whether it's the effect of drugs on employment and matriculation rates, or the efficacy of early childhood education, Coeur d'Alene can identify where they need further data collection and how they wish such research to be conducted.
- This map also outlines the various internship and employment opportunities available to Native youth. These opportunities afford Native youth the chance to try different career pathways before embarking on their educational and professional journey. Like Cody, Native youth thrive when given the chance to test their different passions in a professional environment.
- While engaged in these internship and employment opportunities, Native youth hone their hard and soft skills, helping to develop their professional portfolio. Not only does this help build their resume, but also enhances the skills necessary to become successful young adults.
- **Moving Forward:**
  - Currently the Coeur d'Alene Tribe is working on indigenizing the social studies curriculum in the state of Idaho. Coeur d'Alene is playing a critical role in determining how the State educates their population about Native Americans, helping to break down stereotypes and promote accurate representations of Native Americans in the schoolroom.
  - Coeur d'Alene is working to identify key non-profit organizations to help provide needed services in their communities. It is of the utmost importance that tribes work with non-profits to ensure that the services provided are a) needed within the community, and b) are being administered in a culturally appropriate fashion.
  - Although Coeur d'Alene's programming has already changed community attitudes surrounding success and opportunity for Native youth, it intends on growing and making new pathways for workforce development, educational opportunity, and nation building.

TRIBAL ORGANIZATION: **DR. IAN RECORD, NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS** — DIRECTOR OF PARTNERSHIP FOR TRIBAL GOVERNANCE

- **Highlights:**
  - The Partnership for Tribal Governance (PTG) program works closely with five partner tribes to identify common challenges and innovative solutions to governing in Indian Country. The program focuses on strengthening governance, leadership development, citizen engagement, and educating the general public and media outlets.
  - When discussing nation building in Indian Country it is important to think of such efforts as nation *re*-building. Tribal communities are harnessing the power of their traditional ways to rebuild the infrastructure and governance structures necessary for successful modern nations.
  - The primary emerging trend in workforce development in Indian Country is that tribes are no longer focused on providing jobs for their communities but rather *careers*.
  - It is crucial that tribes are the one's determining measures of success within their nations, and not those outside of the community.
- **Partnership for Tribal Governance:**
  - Partner tribes are currently focused on pursuing self-sufficient economies and governance structures, determining what is needed to offer the jobs, education, and career pathways necessary for healthy and successful communities.
  - It is crucial that tribes, Native organizations, and Tribal Colleges and Universities create sustainable career opportunities for their citizens. Furthermore, tribes must invest in career pathways that are *needed* by the tribe.
  - Once tribes determine which disciplines and careers are imperative for the success of the tribe, they must invest in tools that help their citizens attain the training and education necessary for such careers.
  - Developing the human capacity necessary for successful tribal governance and sustainable economies involves education and training in areas of need.
  - It is not enough to provide tribal citizens pathways for successful careers—tribes must create mechanisms by which they *retain* the talent they help develop.
    - In some communities, this entails offering scholarships with service requirements, while in others it entails grooming individuals for high level positions in areas of need.
  - Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, a PTG partner, has implemented their “Nation Building” initiative that merges their economic development programming and human capacity building efforts.

- The Ysleta del Sur Pueblo casino was a buoy for the local economy and when it went under the tribe suffered greatly. This economic downfall led to a new and holistic approach to workforce development and economic development.
- One result of this new approach was a change their tax code to increase revenue.
- Another result was a change in citizenship criteria, making it easier for individuals to attain citizenship and help the tribal economy.
- Another PTG partner, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, have worked to develop the self-sufficiency of their citizens to empower their nation to become more self-determined.
  - This approach involves healing through culture, developing institutional know-how, and investing in interdepartmental and intra-tribal collaborations.
  - Furthermore, they are strategically pursuing full tribal employment.
- The Coeur d'Alene Tribe, another PTG partner, is innovative in its efforts to build the tribes' research capacity.
  - Coeur d'Alene has identified key areas in which they need further research and have partnered with nearby colleges and universities to help fill that void.
  - Furthermore, the tribe has begun developing pathways for PhD students in disciplines of high need for the tribe.
- The Gila River Indian Community, another PTG partner, is currently addressing the problem of having plentiful job opportunities but not enough credentialed or trained citizens to fill them.
  - In pursuit of fixing such a problem, the Gila River Indian Community has adopted a customized Career Pathway approach.
  - This approach emphasizes the importance of supporting citizens' success in both their trainings *and* in their careers.
- PTG's fifth and final partner, the Quinault Indian Nation, is currently overhauling its employment system to incentivize good performance and career advancement.
  - The Quinault Nation is creating mechanisms that reward employees with stellar performance and those who take advantage of professional development opportunities.
  - The Quinault Nation has also begun implementing apprenticeships in senior management positions.
- For more information on PTG and their partners, please visit the following [link](#).

- **Federal Policy Recommendations:**

- It is the federal government's role to foster a positive and innovative environment for tribal workforce development. This can be achieved, in part, by removing obstacles that inhibit innovation and the implementation of successful programming.
- The Secretary of Labor should charter a special taskforce to identify opportunities for innovation in tribal workforce programs. Such a taskforce should also issue a report detailing ways to reduce barriers to tribal innovation.
- The federal government should restore full funding for vital Native American workforce development and related grant programs; and such funds should be adjusted to account for the increase in population size and the cost of services, such as tuition.
- For further information on PTG's federal policy recommendations, please visit the following [link](#).

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE: **ATHENA BROWN—DEPARTMENT OF LABOR'S INDIAN AND NATIVE AMERICAN PROGRAMS, DIRECTOR**

- **Highlights:**

- Tribes and Native organizations should apply for funding within the Department of Labor that is not expressly for American Indians. These are the largest pools of funding within the Department of Labor and ought to be taken advantage of.
- Tribes and Native organizations should partake in collective collaborative funding opportunities.
- Native youth should submit testimony to the Department of Labor expressing their views and experiences regarding workforce development and what they need to succeed.

- **Funding Opportunities for Tribal Workforce Development**

- Youth Discretionary Grants are designed for specific populations of at-risk youth, such as young offenders, those living in high-poverty areas, and foster youth. For more information on these funding opportunities please visit the following [link](#).
- Youth Formula-Funded Grant Programs provide services for youth between the ages of 14 – 24 in communities who have high rates of unemployment and disadvantaged youth. For more information on these funding opportunities please visit the following [link](#).
- Reentry Employment Opportunities Program provides funding for reentry programming for youth between the ages of 14 – 24 who have been incarcerated in the juvenile justice system.

- Career Pathways for Youth demonstration grants provide funding to help young people attain their first jobs.
- **Division of Indian and Native American Programs:**
  - The Division of Indian and Native American Programs was established under Section 166 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
    - Congress determined that there was a distinct need to establish a separate division within the Department of Labor to help create comprehensive training and employment programs in Indian Country.
  - The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act also created the Native American Employment and Training Council (Council).
    - The Council facilitates consultation with tribes, tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiians.
    - The Council also establishes regulations pertaining to the Division of Indian and Native American Programs.
  - The next planned meeting for the Council will be **September 12 – 13, 2017** and public comment is strongly encouraged.
    - To present testimony for the Council, please contact Athena Brown at [brown.athena@dol.gov](mailto:brown.athena@dol.gov)

## OPEN DISCUSSION

- **Career Development and Pathways for Success**
  - In an effort to develop successful career pathways and move employees from their first job to the next, employers should incentivize professional development engagements.
    - This can include providing paid comp time for attending professional development trainings and seminars.
    - This can also take the form of *providing* professional development engagements for staff.
  - Employers are encouraged to develop their employees' hard and soft skills at early stages in their jobs, particularly for entry level positions. This provides employees with the skills and experience necessary for a budding career.
- **Education and Training Climate**
  - Employers and tribal governments should encourage and incentivize further education and training for their employees.
    - This can take the form of helping offset costs for higher education programs, trainings, or other professional development programming.

- The federal government, tribes, and educators writ large must improve the school climate for Native American youth. We cannot raise our future leaders in classrooms in which they undergo trauma and regular marginalization.
  - This can take the form of changing the school curriculum to more accurately represent Native peoples, as is being done in Idaho with the help of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe
  - This can also take form of anti-bullying efforts, and putative action for teachers fostering unsafe classroom environments.
- Tribes and tribal communities should work towards ending negative stigmas surrounding the pursuit of higher education and professional development.
- **Definitions of Success**
  - Tribes must be the one's determining what their measures of success are. Otherwise, we will be following an inaccurate and harmful metric for success.
  - Furthermore, Native youth must be empowered to determine what success looks like for them. It is tribes' and service providers' responsibility to then help guide and actualize these visions of success.
- **Other Resources and Projects**
  - [Partnership for Tribal Governance](#)
  - [Youth and Labor at the Depart of Labor](#)
  - [Department of Labor's Indian and Native American Programs](#)
  - [Opportunity Youth Index](#)
  - [Corps Network](#)
  - [Child Trends](#)
  - [CLASP](#)