



# Advancing Positive Paths for Native American Boys & Young Men





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## 1.0 Introduction

The diffusion and preservation of cultural knowledge, in the idiom of relationality, among Native boys and young men is a key pathway to success among this underserved and somewhat neglected demographic. This report highlights areas of success by five innovative programs among Indigenous communities in the United States. In the literature on boys and men of color, retaining connection to attributes of culture is difficult, but proves successful in achieving better life, educational and social outcomes. This report builds from this research and identifies in five key programs the mechanism for cultural diffusion, in both the domains of early intervention and policy programs, to provide Native boys and young men connection with cultural signifiers such as: values and ethics, self-sufficiency, family values, and environment. In the end, this report suggests the importance of these interventions and programs in further improved outcomes in education and the need to build on these and enhance their scale of operation.

## 2.0 Native Boys and Men of Color: The Current Situation

Not surprisingly, there is not a significant amount of data documenting the current state of affairs when it comes to Native boys and young men. Like data across Native communities, baseline data is either nonexistent or extremely hard to find. That said, the existent data does begin to paint a dire picture of Native boys and young men in relation to opportunities in life that are suppressed starting at a young age.

Perhaps the largest gains in data collection on Native boys and young men has come in the area of education. These statistics document that Native American boys and young men have one of the highest middle and high school dropout rates among ethnic groups (Mackety and Linder-VanBerschoot 2008). This group is 2.2 times more likely to be suspended from high school when compared to white boys and young men in middle and high school (U.S. DOE 2011-2012).

Moreover, studies reveal that both on and off reservations many schools are not providing an appropriate education for Native students in a manner that incorporates their native heritage through teaching and curriculum. This results in discontinuity between their home culture and what is taught in school, often leading to disengagement and increased dropout rates (Reyhner 1991).

Lastly, the emerging statistics, on suicide among Native youth and young adults has documented that suicide is the second leading cause of death among Native youth age 15 to 24 years old and roughly 3.5 times higher than the national average. (Hummingbird 2011). In some Native communities, like those in Alaska, Native boys and men have more staggering suicide rates.<sup>1</sup>

These statistics are highly contested, “small numbers, coupled with a geographically dispersed student population[s], result in Native students being characterized as statistically insignificant...for purposes of data analysis and research” (Faircloth and Tippeconnic 2010). According to Toney (2007), “structural and institutional racism, [place Native] students...at a further disadvantage in opportunities and outcomes” (p. 8). These structures render Native students statistically insignificant. Consequently, some national-level data may not reflect Native students. Available statistics, however, do reveal a critical pattern that implies a crisis among Native American boys and young men in middle and high schools.

<sup>1</sup> For example, in Alaska, a state with the highest suicide rate in the country, Native boys and young men, 15-24 years old, are four times more likely to commit suicide than the Alaska Native population as a whole. See [http://dhss.alaska.gov/SuicidePrevention/Documents/pdfs\\_sspc/AKSuicideStatistics.pdf](http://dhss.alaska.gov/SuicidePrevention/Documents/pdfs_sspc/AKSuicideStatistics.pdf)



Researchers have asked: “What factors lead to this disparity in educational attainment among Native boys and young men?” Answers have run the gamut from resistance to “acting White” (Warikoo and Carter 2009) to structural and systemic issues rendering Native boys and young men invisible, subject to increased policing, and more likelihood to not graduate from high school (Adelman et al. 2013).

The literature, however, underscores and converges on the following point: that establishing and/or maintaining a variant of young Native men’s connection to their culture is an important component in improving their educational attainment. Brandt (1992) notes several factors contributing to reduced attrition or dropout rates. These factors include parental encouragement, proficiency in students’ Native language, incorporating and honoring traditional values and beliefs, and enrollment in small schools among others. Culture, in its varied expressions and modes of transmission, plays a vital role in educational attainment, behavior, and civic engagement.

It should be noted that “culture” cannot be reduced to a single category and to assume one particular type of transmission of cultural learning and acquisition. In this literature, culture has been broadly conceptualized as: mentoring, support, acquiring traditional knowledge and skills, language acquisition, social enrichment and networking, and connection to traditional and spiritual practices. Naturally, in Indigenous communities, cultural variables will look different depending on belief systems, land, and other culturally relevant mode of transmission. Nonetheless, these activities implicitly define and frame culture around the notion of relationality. “The relational is central to Indigenous ways of knowing and acting” (Wulff 2010). Hence, culture and the modes of cultural acquisition intended to affect educational attainment outcomes is constructed around and informed by relations. Wilson (2008) notes, “rather than viewing ourselves as being in relationship with other people or things, we are the relationships that we hold and are part of” (p.80). The idea being, the person is the bridge that connects one to another. Thus, these activities that conceptualize culture, are also modes of transmission or learning. More importantly, relations are central to operationalizing these activities.

The following factors are associated with and affect educational attainment: lack of connection or concern from teachers, irrelevant curriculum, and parents or family who lack involvement. Native American students have felt the effect of institutional racism causing them a feeling of not being wanted or pushed out (Wax 1967, Hare and Pidgeon 2011). They experience a lack of academic support (Adelman et al 2011, Reyhner 1991) and a lack of parental support (Reyhner 1991, Huffman 2001). They were also more likely to be surrounded by substance and alcohol abuse at home or in their communities (Brandt 1992, Garrett et al 2011).<sup>2</sup>

These factors imply a disconnection to community, self, and culture. These factors are associated with low rates of educational attainment. When understood as factors of relations, they ultimately signify a loss of relations. They are about a disconnection between the individual, their family, their community, their culture and that community’s values. Interventions designed to affect educational outcomes in Native American communities are often constructed around the idea that connection to culture improves the likelihood of educational attainment and improved behavior. Thus, activities that connect Native boys and young men to culture also connect them to community and self. Garrett et al. (2011) found that participation in sweat lodge ceremonies can affect the emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs of Native American men. Colmant and Merta



<sup>2</sup> Reyhner (1991) has the most comprehensive listing of factors related to educational outcomes for Native American students.



(2000) noted that sweat lodge ceremonies improved behavior of young Native boys, it showed improved measures of self-esteem, helped the boys feel relaxed, relieved stress, and left them with a feeling of accomplishment. These authors argue that the sweat is a means to “restore the common bond between the sacred and the secular...” (p. 324). Others have found that curriculum or programs that enhance cultural knowledge and language increase the likelihood of young people to “know stories and facts about their communities and demonstrates higher levels of civic responsibility” (Kana’iaupuni et. al 2010 p. 18). Kana’iaupuni (2010) found these students “reported multiple occasions of working to protect the environment and their communities” (p. 18). It is clear that culture and language are vital components to re-engaging Native boys and young men with community, but also in affecting the likelihood of educational success. These activities imply they are about helping the individual understand their place in the universe.

Activities designed to highlight relations and create and identify relations are vital to improving the educational success of Native boys and young men. Tribal and community relations are core to Native culture. Thus, mentoring, cultural learning, Native language acquisition, and a focus on enhancing relations raise the chances of success. Mentoring is a means of connecting the individual with a set of ideas about him or herself and who they are (Hare and Pidgeon 2011). With respect to Native American boys and young men, learning what Indigenous manhood

means is about establishing oneself as a relationship to mentors, ideas, family, others around themselves, and Native ideas of masculinity (Hokowhitu 2012).

To conclude, this review focused on the connection between culture and improved behavior broadly. The literature implicitly and broadly defines culture as relations. Specifically, it focused on the notion of culture as relations, and demonstrated prevailing interventions like mentoring, teacher-student attention, cultural and language acquisition were important to understanding and building relations. This review also showed how cultural activities lead to improved behavior and re-engagement to community.

Any intervention designed to affect educational attainment and success for Native boys and young men must focus on re-establishing relations with themselves and their communities. Thus, these activities, whether through mentoring or academic support is about reaching a population that is often characterized as lazy or misfit. This population has largely been forgotten. They are statistically invisible and are ignored by society. These structural and system modes of oppression have been and can be effectively countered through engagement with culture and through understanding of relations. Native boys face challenges in educational and life outcomes. These challenges manifest as low high school graduation rates, higher dropout rates, higher rates of suspension, and other challenges that continue to inhibit their contribution to their communities.

### 3.0 Areas of Opportunity and Success for Native American Boys and Young Men

In 2014, First Nation Development Institute (First Nations) was awarded a grant by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in partnership with NEO Philanthropy, and also supported by the Kalliopeia Foundation, to promote opportunity and health for young men of color in rural communities in the South and Southwest. More specifically, First Nations established the “Advancing Positive Paths for Native American Boys and Young Men” program to support efforts taking place in Arizona, New Mexico and Texas aimed at improving education and employment

outcomes for middle school and high school Native boys and young men. Grant support focused on providing Native American boys and young men in New Mexico, Arizona and Texas with mentoring opportunities and culturally specific and relevant program activities by connecting them to meaningful and culturally-based community services and support systems that emphasize educational achievements as a vehicle to future success, with an overall goal of increasing positive outcomes for Native boys and young men.

## 4.0 Project Participants



### 4.1 Cocopah Indian Tribe

Program Name: School Credit Recovery and Career Exploration Program (CRACE)

Location: Somerton, Arizona

Grant Amount: \$50,000



Located in southwest Arizona, the Cocopah Indian Reservation is approximately 13 miles south of Yuma, Arizona with a land base of approximately 10 square miles and home to an estimated 800 tribal members (2010 U.S. Census). Based on the 2010 U.S. Census approximately 51% of the tribal members are male and 25% under 18 years of age with a median age of 39 years old for the Tribe.

In addressing truancy in the community, the Cocopah Tribal Truancy Prevention Program has evolved over the past decade, from an institutional punitive-focused mission to an empowering, youth driven program that encourages male youth empowerment and life skills training. The program's main objective is to offer an alternative to legal prosecution and court action by encouraging attendance compliance through positive adult role modeling and motivational incentives. Successful pillars of the Cocopah Truancy Program that have made it successful have included increasing student attendance and performance, reducing delinquency, identifying and addressing familial risks and needs, providing positive role models and healthy lifestyle activities, job shadowing and career exploration. Although Cocopah male youth reside in a socially and economically depressed region, truancy rates have dropped by 25% in the past year.

Under the First Nations Advancing Positive Paths for Native American Boys and Young Men project, the Cocopah Indian Tribe CRACE program had the following successes:

1. Reduced Cocopah adolescent truancy by 25% during the 2014-2015 active school year by enrolling truant students after 4 unexcused absences in school.
2. Established a talking circle program that would meet monthly for all truant program participants to provide program feedback, plan events and conduct focus group social studies.
3. Conducted Community Awareness campaigns to decrease youth suspension rates by 50% during the 2014-2015 school year.
4. Established a Youth Leadership panel of five students that received mentorship by the current Tribal Council.
5. Established a Career Exploration agenda and calendar and executed field trips for all enrolled truant students.
6. Established a five station computer lab with online credit recovery course programs. This access decreased student credit loss by 100%.





## 4.2 Santa Fe Indian School Leadership Institute

Project Name: Pueblo Pathways Project

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico

Grant Amount: \$75,000



Established in 1997, under the Santa Fe Indian School, the Leadership Institute was developed to create a space for discourse on a wide range of public policy and tribal community issues challenging the vitality and spirit of the New Mexico tribes. This work led to public and tribal policy impact, beginning with "Community Institutes," bringing together members from the 22 tribes of New Mexico, topic experts and policymakers on a series of pressing state and national issues impacting Native and non-Native populations. The Institute has since served as a catalyst to create discourse and train community members/youth on policy issues to create systemic change. The program focuses its work through these four major themes: Leadership, Community Service, Public Policy, and Critical Thinking.

Under the First Nations Advancing Positive Pathways for Native American Boys and Young Men project, the Leadership Institute used community-based engagement as the intervention strategy to reduce middle school and high school dropout rates within Pueblo Indian communities.

Their program taught young Indigenous boys and men the value of positive mentorship by helping to build and foster relationships. This was accomplished by utilizing mentors to increase awareness of traditional culturally based core values and education. Moreover, mentors helped youth apply these core values to their current life scenarios and circumstances. Further, the Pueblo Pathways Project created opportunities for young Indigenous boys and men to engage in activities that directly embody the areas of environmental stewardship, retain the core value of contribution/giving back to community, supporting their personal development, and leveraging partnerships and community resources to strengthen positive education outcomes for project participants.



## 4.3 Tewa Women United

Project Title: Sengipaa Ing Vi: Journey of Becoming a Man Project

Location: Santa Cruz, New Mexico

Grant Amount: \$75,000



Tewa Women United (TWU) was established in 1989 by several Tewa women as a support group for various issues including alcoholism, suicide, and domestic and sexual assault/sexual abuse. In 2001, Tewa Women United became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. TWU is a Native woman-centered, women run nonprofit organization that provides a collective intertribal women's voice in the Tewa homelands of Northern New Mexico. The operational mission is to provide safe spaces for Indigenous women to uncover the power, strength and skills they possess to become positive forces for social change in their families and communities. They are an intertribal and multicultural organization that lives and puts breath to Tewa values, language and life ways to defend and care for their beloved lands and waters, families and communities.

The TWU SENGIPAA ING VI (Journey of Becoming a Man) project worked to re-engage youth disconnected from their culture and traditions by focusing on healing intergenerational trauma as well as

the concepts of patriarchy and gender roles. Participants were youth of the six Tewa-speaking pueblos in Northern New Mexico. Participants were pre-identified as being disconnected from work or school and provided an opportunity for structured and experiential learning with positive Native adult male role models and mentors for Native boys aged 14-18 years. Utilizing their existing A'Gin Healthy Sexuality Body Sovereignty interactive youth program/curriculum, TWU focused on strengthening Native boys and young men by adding components adapted from the Call To Men model.<sup>3</sup> Previous experience has shown that these initiatives fulfill the effectiveness in motivating youth to reach their potential, increasing youth leadership capacity, and building skills for future careers.



## 4.4 STAR School

Project Title: Mentoring Native American Young Men and Boys

Location: Flagstaff, Arizona

Grant Amount: \$75,000



Painted Desert Demonstration Projects is a 501(c)(3) charter school. They are located adjacent to the southwestern edge of the Navajo Nation and serve a population that is 99% Native American. Their mission is to inspire each other to do the best and to be of service to all relations. The school is built upon the Navajo values of Relationship (K'e), Responsibility, Respect, and Reasoning. These fundamental values are grounded in all their work with students, parents, and community grounded in these fundamental values.

Under the First Nations "Advancing Positive Pathways for Native American Boys and Young Men" project, the STAR School focused on pairing 20 Native American young men and boys who were at risk of dropping out of high school or who have dropped out of high school in their area with nine respected Native American adult men and elders and one Native American woman teacher who are committed to working with the youth. The overall goal was to 1) create an organized program to strengthen the traditional Navajo practice of K'e in which Navajo adult role models acknowledge their clan relationships to these young men and boys and build their trust and relationship through regular male bonding activities, and 2) leverage the existing adult Navajo men who are reaching out to these young men and boys now into a more coherent group so they can share resources and expertise that will be sustained after the culmination of this program.



## 4.5 Ysleta del Sur Pueblo

Project Title: Empowering Tribal Warriors

Location: Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Texas

Grant Amount: \$50,000



The Tribal Empowerment Department was founded in 1992 by the Pueblo to meet the academic needs of Native American students enrolled in public school. The program serves over 400 students a year (male and female) through educational advocacy, tutoring and educational enrichment, literacy enhancement, afterschool/summer childcare, cultural enrichment, and the Next Generation Summer Youth Job Experience program (49 teenagers served in 2014). The Pueblo's cultural values are embedded

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.acalltomen.org> for more information.

in all the programs it offers. The Ysleta del Sur Pueblo (YDSP) Empowerment Department’s Library and Education Center is the educational center for the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo commonly referred to as the “Tigua” people. Ysleta del Sur Pueblo has a tribal member enrollment of 1,713 people, and has a descendant population totaling 1,475. The center’s mission is to provide direct services to create economic independence through education, workforce development and by utilizing lifelong learning. The center’s vision is to foster a self-sufficient and empowered tribal community well prepared to succeed in a modern world. The center offers educational and literary programs, including afterschool tutors, computer literacy classes, an employment and training program, a higher education program, financial literacy, a VITA program, a Pre-Kindergarten Program, and a Tiwa language program.

The Empowering Tribal Warriors Project provided a Tigua mentorship and life-skills program so that young tribal men could make educated and strategic decisions about their future as community leaders through higher education and career building, while preserving Tigua cultural values. The young men utilized their experience and guidance of mentors and staff to map out future career goals that would be kept in a portfolio by the Empowerment Department and would serve as a tool to continue their education and career-building endeavors after the grant ends.

## 5.0 Project Outcomes & Observations

The intent of the “Advancing Positive Pathways for Native American Boys and Young Men” project was to focus on connecting Native boys to meaningful and culturally based community interventions and support systems that emphasize educational achievements as a vehicle for future success. This report looks explicitly at two domains: 1) early intervention to prevent high school dropout rates; 2) policy programs focused on connecting caring adults with youth who may be disconnected from school and work. Using data collected from project reports and interviews, this report looks at variables that contribute to positive outcomes for Native boys and young men along the two domains. In Table 1, the five programs are divided between these domains.

Early Intervention Strategies	Support Strategies
Santa Fe Indian School Leadership Institute	Santa Fe Indian School Leadership Institute
STAR School	STAR School
Ysleta del Sur Pueblo	Ysleta Pueblo
Cocopah Indian Tribe	Tewa Women United

Table 1. Programs using culturally based curriculum

Research has shown, as noted in the previous section, that early intervention programs framed within a context of relationality and premised on connecting Native boys to their culture improve behavior through strengthening their sense of belonging and place within their tribal communities. One participant observed upon his experience in a supported program, “I felt like who I am as Pueblo and I felt like I just opened up to others and I took pride in our ways.” This observation underscores the impact of the program in connecting to culture and connecting to the community. Further, this observation demonstrates a sense of identity, and the literature has demonstrated that strong cultural identity is a key factor in the likelihood of success in educational attainment and in life outcomes.

Cultural transmission through mentorships and the construction of relations of support through early intervention programs were important factors in each of these programs. As noted above, the effect of the connecting to cultural traditions via relations of support or mentors impacted the participants in positive ways. They are divided into four categories: 1) success across the communities, 2) expressions of self-sufficiency, 3) the employment and expression of relationality, and, 4) behavior and outlook of the young men. Using Indigenous evaluation models, the following diagram illustrates the logic motivating and guiding this report (see Figure 1).

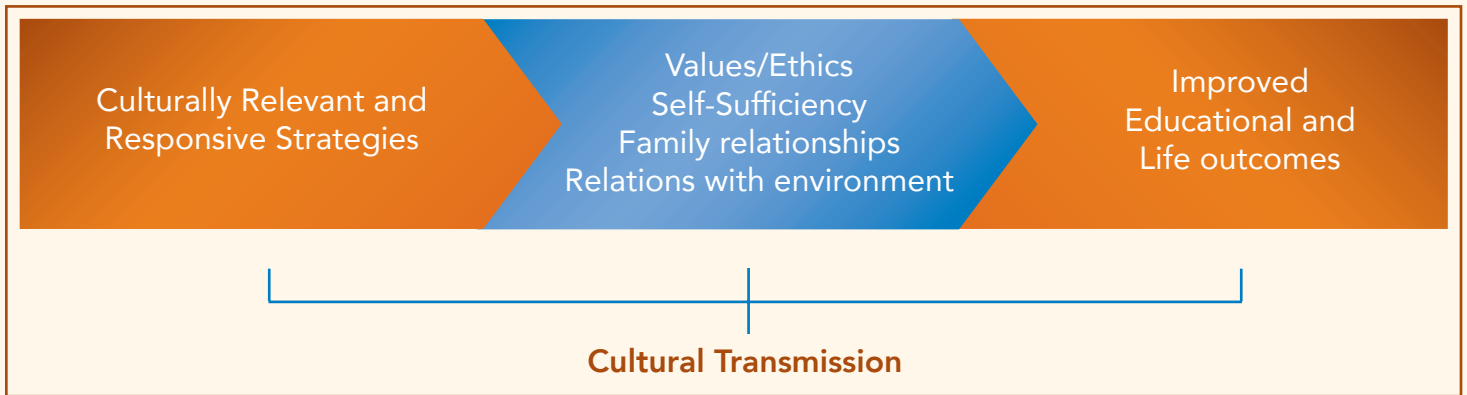


Figure 1. From Policy to Improved Educational and Life Outcomes

This model is derived from the emerging Indigenous evaluation criteria, but more importantly, these categories, according to Indigenous thought, are the foundation of good relations. Benally (1994) and Brown (1998) note four areas of Indigenous thought necessary for what constitutes success: 1) the proper development of the mind, 2) skills that will enable survival, 3) understanding and appreciation of positive relationships, and, 4) understanding and relating to one’s home and environment. Each of these, according to Indigenous scholars, if addressed appropriately lead to improvements in behavior and consequently, life choices that sustain and maintain an Indigenous ethic of relations.

Each of the five programs was designed either around early intervention mechanisms or around the broader mechanism of reconnecting these young men and

boys to their family life and cultural communities. Despite how these programs were designed, the outcomes for both were centered on improved behavior and reconnection to the tribe and the cultural community. Based on observation, interviews, and review of records for these programs, this report found the following areas of importance for cultural transformation and improved educational and life outcomes:

1. Values and ethics
2. Self-sufficiency
3. Family relationships, and
4. Environment.

The remainder of the report will explain how these areas were identified and demonstrate how they improve outcomes for Native boys and young men.

## 5.1 Values and Ethics

Indigenous thinking centers on a set of values. These values are informed by relationships (Wilson 2008). Relationships, then, must be evaluated. In evaluating these programs, the idea of success varied from program to program, but ultimately the notion of success took the following form: connection to self, community, culture, and becoming a “positive example.” The underlying assumption in each of these programs noted the correlation between absorption of cultural values and the effect it had on the individual, and the expression of the values acquired through connecting with the culture. One program manager expressed it this way, “success is understanding that you can’t do anything alone, reconnecting the boys to the culture is about connecting these boys to the way things used to be in our communities.” This assertion was affirmed by several participants, one observed, “I feel like a young warrior. I learned a lot about the culture and about what was right and wrong. [The others and I] matured a lot, we started to know what was right and wrong. I felt like a part of the community.” The capacity for these young men to acknowledge that their moral compass was not fully developed is a significant indication of future behavior. This section will focus on how the program impacted the acquisition of the ethical and values disposition of the young men. Table 2 below focuses on the mentorship aspect of three programs, it demonstrates the rate of success based on interviews, observations, and archived records from participants, mentors, and program managers.

Program	Mode of Transmission	Connection	Knowledge of Values	Impact
Leadership Institute	Mentorship	<i>"Mentors were like family. The boys turned to them for help; the mentors treated the boys like fathers and older brothers."</i>	<i>"Sharing stories and our traditions was meaningful."</i>	<i>"I have seen huge improvements in their personalities – they are more polite, they are improving academically..."</i>
Ysleta del Sur Pueblo	Early Intervention and Mentorship	<i>"The boys started to open up to the mentors and express how they were feeling. They talked to the mentors about their home life and the challenges."</i>	<i>"The boys started identifying themselves, where they came from...When the boys connect to the mentors, they feel more a part of the community, and the respect they have for themselves and others grows."</i>	<i>"The mentors taught simple things...I can connect with my grandmother. I saw my grades improve and got the courage to take a test for college credits. The mentors encouraged me."</i>
Tewa Women United	Mentorship	<i>With some challenges for mentorship, the TEWA found the mentoring aspect successful, as some mentors noted it was "awesome."</i>	<i>"One young man confirmed that, although his parents expect him to succeed 'in a business suit--a lawyer or something like that,' [he said] '... I learned that you've got to stick to your roots, and do stuff for the people."</i>	The young men noted they felt responsible for "Everything. All things and family."

Table 2. Cultural Transmission in Values and Ethics

These programs of early intervention insisted on developing relations of support for the participants. The mentorships resulted in the young men feeling connected to the communities and to themselves. Furthermore, in the programs with a specific mentorship dimension, the early interventions built a relationship of support. For example, the Cocopah Tribe's Credit Recovery and Career Exploration program which offers programs designed to reduce attrition and provide academic services to assist in high school graduation made an indelible impact on the young men. The Cocopah Tribe notes:

The tribe has two young men who were suspended from attending public school. Student A was transferred to a smaller class setting and with fewer required hours. He has been successful in maintaining his attendance in school and keeping his behavior in check. Student B was also expelled from attending a regular public school. He completely did not attend any school during his 8th grade year. The education staff worked with the High School District to enroll him in online classes and waived the requirement to have an 8<sup>th</sup> grade promotion certificate. The student is now a freshman in high school and doing very well. He is progressing socially and academically with his peers. He has not been a behavior issue and has not been suspended this year.

In both instances, the program of intervention, predicated on relationships of support, succeeded. Of special

note is the emphasis on social development and improved behaviors where Adelman (2011) notes that academic support for at-risk students is a mode of relationships that is often missing. Benally (1994) contends that this support is about relationships, the program of early intervention is an extension of Indigenous kinship, and as noted from programs with mentorships, it builds relationships of trust and improved behavior. **In this instance with Cocopah, early intervention truancy was reduced by 52.5%.**

## 5.2 Self-Sufficiency

According to Indigenous thinking, self-sufficiency is critical to expressing proper relations, the notion being if you cannot take care of yourself, then you cannot be much help to others. Hence, for Cajete (2000) and LaFrance (2004), the notion of personal sovereignty or recognition of the whole person and the interdependencies of that person in whatever context is critical for evaluation. Self-sufficiency is important to proper relations, self-sufficiency relates to the broader goals of this project of improving life outcomes.

Program	Mode of Transmission	Relationships	Knowledge of Life skills	Impact
Leadership Institute	Mentorship	<i>"The mentors worked with the young men to teach them about fishing, helping community members, and helping understand the natural world."</i>	<i>"I could do this for a living; I never thought I could. I'd rather be doing this outside than in the classroom."</i>	<i>"What do I need to do to be prepared before I start this?" "I need to check in with my family, and I need to use my skills to take care of the other boys."</i>
Ysleta del Sur Pueblo	Early Intervention and Mentorship	<i>"The mentors weren't too strict; they were fun" "The mentors introduced us to what was possible with school, that helped me want to go to college."</i>	<i>"The site visit to the university was really good. It helped me meet people and helped me know what I can learn and become. I knew I was going to college, but now I feel more prepared and excited."</i>	<i>"I saw my grades improve and I got the courage to take a test for college credits for my sophomore year."</i>
Cocopah Indian Tribe	Early Intervention	The talking circle program was effective in bringing key individuals together to build the support needed for the at-risk young men.	Truancy rates decreased by 52%. The career field trips were successful. <i>"The kids responded well to these trips, after these trips one student went from wanting to be a truck driver to wanting to be an engineer. He wanted to go to college."</i>	<i>"When the program first began, it was very difficult to get participants and student to engage. Although it has been slow, there is a shift in the attitude of cooperation with some of our parents."</i>

Table 3. Cultural Transmission in Self-Sufficiency

The notion of success in this category focuses on having the skills to provide for one's self and for others. An important key finding within this category centers on the program "being able to open the eyes of the young men to the potential in themselves," as noted by one program manager. The qualitative assessment saw the development of skills, the strengthening of cultural identity and recognition of individual responsibility. These

have been translated as improved behavior and changed outlook of their future. This project and its programs were successful in improving behavior that eventually leads to improved life outcomes, as is the case with the Cocopah Indian Tribe (noted in the previous section) with students suspended but being able to take online courses so as not to critically affect their chances of educational attainment. Moreover, other program participants felt qualitatively better about their identity, skills, abilities and relationships, all fostering elements of self-sufficiency.

## 5.3 Family Relationships

The young men and boys across the programs often come from single parent households and were often from home environments that may not have prioritized education. Some boys came from homes with absent fathers. Hence the component of positive male role models was significant for the boys. Positive relationships with their families, tribal communities, academic communities and so forth are critical for positive life outcomes. Scholars have noted the importance of family support for educational attainment. The Tewa Women United observed, "Equally as revealing was the evident cohesiveness of the group, and the respectful and affectionate behavior they displayed with one another." This level of intimate and affectionate bonding is evident of developing trusting relationships.

Program	Mode of Transmission	Relationships	Knowledge Responsibility of Relationships	Impact
Tewa Women United	Mentorship	The Live Respect Curriculum proved successful in helping the young men develop positive relationships with themselves and with women. One facilitator noted, "there were boys who were self-reflecting as they went..." through the sessions, "exhibiting awareness" of their language and attitudes.	The boys developed a set of skills around being able to change their relationships to themselves, to women, and to their community. These skills enabled them to develop a set of skills to navigate intimacy and vulnerability in healthy ways.	TWU noted that the boys in this program "created a team unity and a lifelong brotherhood that has solidified their relationships that has helped each in their own unique way." According to the report, the boys in this program "created a team unity and a life long brotherhood that has solidified their relationships that has helped each in their own unique way."
Ysleta del Sur Pueblo	Early Intervention and Mentorship	The afterschool program developed positive relationship between the school and the tribe. Further it focused on developing relationships between the mentors and the participants. The projects like building ovens and traditional crafts facilitated improvements in family dynamics.	"There were kids who were shy and outgoing – the kids would build relationships with each other. They started taking it upon themselves to get to know everyone. There were relationships that developed because of their sense of responsibility to each other."	"I learned how to make the traditional oven, and now I can build one for my grandma." "I wove a belt for my grandparents, and she really liked it. She now wants me to make more."

STAR School	Mentorship	The STAR school, proactive outreach from the mentors and tutors was essential to the program's success: <i>"...What did seem to work was having their mentors, who go to their homes and with whom they have a deep relationship..."</i>	Emphasizing cultural connections was a key component of STAR. The use of the sweat lodge emphasizes relations: <i>"Those young men who attended the sweat lodges indicated that they felt a sense of being part of the men in the community. It was the mentors in this project who helped these young men feel like they were becoming men."</i>	<i>"Recent dropouts got interested again in finishing school and actually got back in school. Other youth were not engaged because we just couldn't find enough mentors who felt they could take time out of their busy lives to do this mentoring."</i>
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Table 4. Cultural Transmission in Family Relationships

What Table 4 shows are the difficulties, at times, of re-centering family relations. Often, the family relations in Indigenous thought must extend beyond "blood relations." In the case of the STAR School those relationships were found in the mentors, but more importantly, in the Project Tutor. As documented by the STAR School, the tutor played the most essential role in the STAR program in educational attainment, and also in developing relationships of trust. But, as noted by the STAR School, the tutor alone was not sufficient, rather it was a relationship of support that proved to be essential and critical for its success. The STAR School observes:

We found that just providing tutoring to the young men who had dropped out was not sufficient. The tutor and other mentors ended up taking young men from their homes to alternative high school programs that were 60 miles from their homes because their parents either were not around, did not have transportation, or were abusing alcohol and were not fit to drive. Sometimes the tutor picked them up at school and took them home. We shifted our tutoring to do whatever was necessary to re-enroll these students. We were successful in 75% of the cases.

What this observation underscores in the case of the STAR School and in the case of the others is that relationships of support, regardless of whether they are explicitly or implicitly framed in terms of culture, are central to educational attainment and success academically. In the case of the Cocopah Indian Tribe Credit Recovery and Career Exploration program, the teachers, principals, tribal council, parents, and tutors met regularly to find ways to ensure the success of their Native boys. Caring older adults that show concern for the young men is the common denominator. It demonstrates to these boys that they matter. These boys often grew up in environments where little concern was given to them consequently, a little interest in their future, "opens their eyes to who they are and the potential they have," as one program manager noted.

## 5.4 Environment

Indigenous scholars agree that understanding of the natural world is an important part of one's identity. Benally (1994) notes, "Establishing an intimate relationship with nature begins with the acceptance that all creation is intelligent and beneficial in and of itself." This means that all actions must be governed by respectful intentions for all creation. The programs developed around a consistent implicit theme of cultural identity. The implicit assumption for some, and explicit operating assumption for others, focused on the connection between cultural knowledge and reverence therein and "success" in education and life.

Each of the programs involved "elders" in its broadest conception as a means to connect the boys to their communities. Some accomplished this through tutor programs, outreach programs, sweat lodges, outdoor activities, or cultural skills and arts training. Yet, in each of these instances, the idea of culture acquisition and

“success” moving in tandem was the motivating assumption. Indigenous scholars understand that central to indigenous identity is the respect for the natural order (Deloria 1994). Hence, any notion of “success” must also account for this particular dimension. In Ysleta del Sur Pueblo with the activity of building the *orno*, an understanding of the natural products to make the oven was essential to its construction. One participant noted there that he wanted to build one for his grandmother, and his grandmother expected him to build one for her. This participant noted he could do it in a manner respectful of the earth.

Program	Mode of Transmission	Relationships	Respect for Natural World	Impact
Leadership Institute	Mentorship	<i>“The boys were taken on a 3-day rafting trip; they received native names from the mentors and those names had something to do with the environment.”</i>	<i>“I’d rather be outside than in the classroom.”</i> Participants learned about nature, fish, health of the rivers, stream ecology, and plants for medicine.	<i>“Students that were detached from community, each other, re-connected over the fire – outside – they opened up and expressed respect and gratitude for each other.”</i>
STAR School	Mentorship	The program offered community based and gardening programs. The young men were trained in this, and their services were requested by the local community.	In the sweat lodge, the young men learned of their place in the natural world. The gardening also helped the young men in understanding the effort required to farm and grow produce.	“What we discovered is that the young men who are most disengaged from finishing their education are also the ones most disengaged from their culture and are not generally motivated to endure the extreme discomfort of the sweat as more culturally rooted young men are.
Tewa Women United	Mentorship	The older guys help mentor the young ones and seemly had some positive effects on all of them. Support was very evident for the entire group from one to the other as they grew before our very eyes it is remarkable the time, quality time has on an individual in a positive and healthy manner. For these guys the project offered them a safe space, opportunity, and lifelong experiences that will be resourceful as they continue with their lives.	In every activity we engage with the Tewa language and share a new word so that what the activity has value added will include words that will then be understood and carried with in them. In action and leading by example shows how a pueblo man carries himself, provides, protects, and shares with his family and or community. Whether it be produce from the harvest or songs for everyone the preservation and the strengthening with ensure that the culture is carried on.	According to an internal assessment, Tewa noted, “after participating in the project, youth felt a stronger sense of cultural belonging...”

Table 5. Cultural Transmission in Environment

## 6.0 Conclusions: Prioritizing Relationality in Improving Indigenous Education Outcomes

Improving outcomes for youth in Indigenous communities remains an important area of research and program intervention. This report highlighted five innovative programs that are restructuring the pedagogical approaches toward fostering linkages to cultural communities and enhancing relationality among Native boys and young men. It is useful to focus on the unique features of these programs and determine how they can inform Native education on a larger scale. This report identified four areas of success: values and ethics, self-sufficiency, environment, and family relationships. Among the two domains, early intervention and support programs, these proved to be the most fruitful at replicating and building upon in situ cultural capital of Native boys and young men as they make their way through the formal education process.



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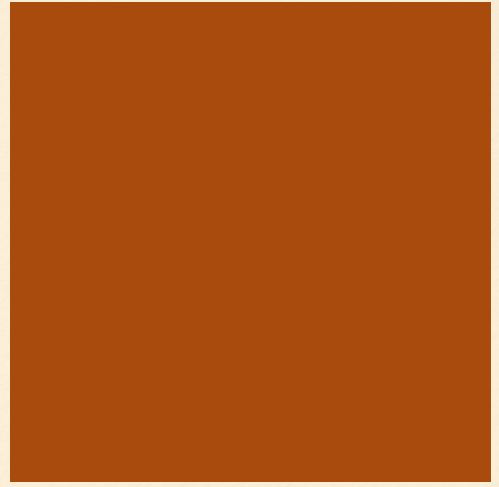
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