



# **Generation Indigenous: Increasing Support and Opportunity for Native Youth**

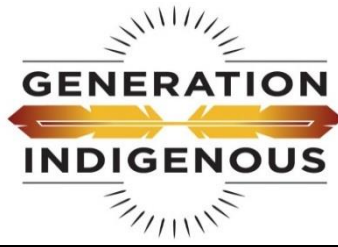
## **2015 Update Report**

Executive Office of the President

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*President Barack Obama joins students for a Yup'ik cultural dance performance at Dillingham Middle School in Dillingham, Alaska, Sept. 2, 2015. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)*

## **INTRODUCTION**

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Last year, President Barack Obama launched a nationwide initiative to lift up the lives of Native youth in America, who, for too long, have gone unrecognized for their incredible talents and strengths. The Generation Indigenous (Gen-I) initiative seeks to shine a spotlight on Native youth who often grapple with challenges more severe than their non-Native peers, but who also refuse to be defined by statistics or stereotypes. Through Gen-I, many Native youth across the country are embodying the positive change they want to see in their communities, whether by mentoring others, learning their Native languages, or by serving on youth councils. In doing so, they contribute to what makes America such a rich and diverse country. The Administration is proud to stand behind Native youth by advancing new policies, increasing program resources, and providing new opportunities for engagement. This report provides an update on the progress

made under Gen-I and how Gen-I will continue to move forward fueled by the strength and resilience of Native youth across the country.

## **GEN-I GOALS**

- ***Policy: Shining a Spotlight on American Indian and Alaska Native Youth***  
Generation Indigenous aims to increase national visibility, broad-based support, and awareness of the issues facing Native youth today.
- ***Budget: Effective, Targeted Federal Investments***  
The federal government is using a multi-pronged approach to improve the lives of Native youth, which includes the creation of new initiatives and programs focused on cradle-to-career education strategies, and a new budget alignment effort across federal agencies that uses metrics to measure success.
- ***Outreach: Increasing Opportunity for Native Youth***  
Through a range of efforts both within and outside of the federal government, Gen-I aims to create new and enhanced ways to empower Native youth through access to employment, a quality education, and tribal capacity building.

## **POLICY UPDATES**

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Gen-I focused on two main policy areas during its first year. The first was the Bureau of Indian Education's (BIE) Blueprint for Reform, the Department of Interior (DOI)'s plan for transforming BIE to provide world class instruction to tribal students. The second focused on the Department of Education (ED)'s partnership with tribal communities to develop a comprehensive approach to college and career readiness through Native Youth Community Projects.

### ***Bureau of Indian Education Reform***

After numerous meetings with tribal leaders, educators, school boards, parents and students, a BIE study group issued recommendations that became the basis of the BIE Blueprint for Reform that DOI issued on June 13, 2014. The document outlines urgent challenges within the existing structure of the BIE. As a result, the agency is taking a new approach to the education of Native students by reorganizing into a resource provider that serves tribally-controlled schools. This approach supports tribal self-determination by facilitating tribal control over education of Native children, while ensuring that they continue to receive BIE support as part of the federal trust responsibility.

Exposure to qualified, well-trained teachers is critical to providing Native youth a high-quality education. BIE is addressing this need by partnering with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to provide BIE teachers with the opportunity to receive training and become National Board Certified teachers (NBC). As a result of this partnership, close to 275 BIE teachers registered for the NBC exam, which was funded through ED's Education Program Enhancement grants. The Bureau of Indian Education is making progress towards its goal of having 1,000 teachers working toward National Board Certification by 2017. Also supporting this effort to train and support BIE teachers is a new partnership with The New Teacher Project (TNTP). This partnership will provide expert instructional training for teachers at 30 BIE-funded schools whose tribes are receiving Sovereignty in Indian Education grants. These grants fund the building of tribes' capacity to operate their own reservation schools.

Technology plays a critical role in education today. To ensure BIE students have access to the latest technology, DOI partnered with Verizon and Microsoft to provide high-speed cellular data service and hardware to students living in BIE-funded dormitories. Portable tablets will allow these students to enhance their learning in and out of the classroom.



*Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell with Native Youth from Salt River Elementary School (Photo provided by DOI)*

### ***Native Youth Community Projects***

The Department of Education's Native Youth Community Projects (NYCP) initiative provides grants to communities to identify barriers and opportunities for Native youth, and design strategies to improve outcomes. The grant projects will assist thousands of Native youth in 12 communities by increasing kindergarten readiness, enhancing culturally responsive teaching, exposing students to college opportunities through visits and summer programming,

supporting the transition of Native youth from middle to high school, promoting Science Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM) skill-building programs, and supporting physical and mental health of Native students. Partnerships include school districts and tribes, Boys and Girls Clubs and other support services, along with institutions of higher education and health services.

### ***Department of Education School Environment Listening Sessions Report***

ED, through the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, and its Office for Civil Rights, held nine school environment listening sessions across the country last year with over 1,000 attendees, including Native youth, educators, parents, and community advocates. People shared their ideas on how to better meet the unique educational and cultural needs of Native students. Discussions included bullying, student discipline, Native imagery and symbolism, and the implications of all of these school climate issues. The listening sessions led to the release of the Student Environment Listening Sessions Tour Report (Report) on October 15, 2015, and reinforced what many in Indian Country already knew--that school environment improvement efforts are not reaching Native American youth. This failure has a negative impact on how Native youth view their educational and professional opportunities in this country. The Report demonstrates the need for initiatives like Gen-I to continue promoting positive self-image through a focus on culture and inspiring Native youth to use their voices to create positive change.

## **COORDINATED BUDGET**

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The Administration is demonstrating a deep commitment to Native youth by calling for increased investments in the FY 2016 Budget across the government. In addition, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is working to improve coordination across the federal government to ensure strategic and efficient programming to better serve Native youth and their communities.

### ***FY 2016 Highlights For Youth***

The President's proposed FY 2016 Budget made new and increased investments in youth and education. These investments include: \$34.2 million at DOI to extend broadband internet and computer access to all BIE-funded schools and dormitories; \$10 million at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and \$8 million at DOI to address teacher housing

needs; \$50 million at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide youth-focused behavioral, mental health, and substance abuse services; \$53 million for Native Youth Community Projects at ED to support community-driven, comprehensive strategies to improve college and career-readiness of Native youth; and \$904 million total funding for BIE elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools (12% over the FY 2015 enacted level).

### ***FY 2017 OMB Guidance for Agencies on Native Youth Priorities***

In July 2015, the White House released FY 2017 budget guidance directing agencies to prioritize Native youth programming and coordinate around six different outcome goals. The six different outcome goals are to: improve educational outcomes and life outcomes for Native youth; increase access to quality teacher housing; improve access to the Internet; support the implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA); reduce teen suicide; and increase tribal control of criminal justice. The ultimate objective is to improve educational and life outcomes for Native youth through increased cross-agency budget coordination and support for effective programs, self-governance, and measurement of success.



*Native Youth from the Warm Springs Nation at the White House Tribal Youth Gathering, July 9, 2015—Photo Courtesy of the Center for Native American Youth (CNAV)*

## **NATIVE YOUTH OPPORTUNITY**

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### ***National Native Youth Network***

The White House, in partnership with the DOI and the Aspen Institute's Center for Native American Youth, launched the National Native Youth Network (Network). The Network

is a platform to elevate Native youth voices, increase Native youth access to resources and opportunities, and to connect Native youth with each other across the nation. In the past month, the Network has grown to over 1,500 individual youth and youth groups.

### ***Gen-I Challenge***

The Administration encouraged Native youth to take the Gen-I Challenge (Challenge) by creating positive change in their communities and documenting it to share with their peers via the Network. Some examples of successful Challenges include: setting up tribal youth councils, developing Native language immersion programs, creating suicide prevention programs for their peers, and researching climate change impacts on their communities. Youth who took the Challenge before the summer of 2015 were invited to attend the first-ever White House Tribal Youth Gathering on July 9, 2015.

The White House also seeks to engage state and local governments in Gen-I. The National Lieutenant Governors Association passed a resolution in support of Gen-I in July 2015 inspiring the launch of the Gen-I State Challenge. A diverse range of states helped usher the resolution through, including Montana, Alaska, Indiana, Washington, Rhode Island, Iowa, and South Dakota.

### ***Creating Opportunity for Native Youth Convening***

On April 8, 2015, First Lady Michelle Obama convened over 60 representatives from foundations, nonprofits, tribal governments, and federal agencies to discuss creating opportunity for Native youth. Four Cabinet secretaries led breakout sessions focused on juvenile justice, education, economic development and the workforce, and health and social services. The National Congress of American Indians joined with partner organizations, foundations, and other groups to form a Native Youth Partnership to continue the conversation. The Partnership held a roundtable in May to discuss the scope of their efforts.

### ***Cabinet Native Youth Listening Tour***

The President and First Lady's experience during their visit to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe helped them realize there is no substitute for visiting with Native youth in their communities. As a result, the President directed his entire Cabinet to follow suit, prompting the launch of the Cabinet Native Youth Listening Tour. Top Administration officials have been asked to engage with Native youth to identify challenges they face and potential solutions to those challenges, including opportunities to bolster federal policies and programs that will help



youth reach their potential. In the ten months since the Tour began, eight Cabinet members and two members of the Subcabinet answered the call to engage with Native youth from twelve tribal communities across nine states. Highlights include:

- Administrator Gina McCarthy of the Environmental Protection Agency spent two full days in the Pacific Northwest visiting the Lummi and Swinomish reservations. During her visit, McCarthy spoke with tribal leaders about the difficult environmental challenges they face. Lummi youth led a tour of the reservation, including a shellfish hatchery and the local tribal college. McCarthy learned how both communities are working to preserve their local environment and create economic opportunity.
- Secretary Penny Pritzker of the Department of Commerce visited the Bay Mills Indian Community in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and met with local Native American leaders and students at the Bay Mills Community College to discuss how government can best empower tribes to chart their own economic futures.
- Secretary Sylvia Burwell of the Department of Health and Human Services visited the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Blackfeet Nation in Montana. During her visit, she spent time discussing the importance of Native language revitalization efforts, how tribal social services programs protect Native youth, and how tribal health departments are fundamental to keeping kids healthy.

### ***White House Tribal Youth Gathering***

A priority of Gen-I is to provide Native youth greater opportunity to elevate their voices so issues important to them can be heard in the national dialogue. Like the annual White House Tribal Nations Conference, the first ever White House Tribal Youth Gathering created a space where Native youth could discuss their ideas and voice their concerns, as well as develop a stronger network of peers from other communities. On July 9, 2015, the White House welcomed more than 1,000 Native youth - representing 230 tribes from 42 states - to Washington, D.C. The Tribal Youth Gathering brought Native youth together with First Lady Michelle Obama, members of the Cabinet, senior White House officials, federal agency staff, members of Congress, and nonprofit organizations. Native youth were encouraged to take action on issues that matter to them and to value their voices and perspectives. In conjunction with the Youth Gathering, the Administration announced commitments to continue supporting Native youth,

such as higher education grants, health and mentoring initiatives, and expanded economic opportunities.

## CONCLUSION

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The Generation Indigenous initiative has provided Native youth with a national platform connecting them to policymakers, elected leaders, educational resources and, perhaps most importantly, each other. The Gen-I movement recognizes the power and knowledge of Native youth to effect positive change, not only within their own communities, but for the nation at large, and encourages youth to share their ideas and experiences with one another. While these young leaders will most assuredly find support in one another, they will also need powerful and compassionate allies to help them on their leadership journey. As it continues to gain momentum, Gen-I will have a perennial advocate through the multi-agency efforts of the White House Council on Native American Affairs. Federal, tribal, and private stakeholders promoting resilient tribal nations must continue to work together. With partnership and support, the youth of Gen-I will continue surging forward, creating strong and thriving tribal communities in their wake.



*President Barack Obama greets audience members after he delivers remarks on expanding economic opportunity for communities across the country, including the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, at Durant High School in Durant, Oklahoma, July 15, 2015. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)*