



# Higher Education Self-Study for WINHEC Accreditation

The Department of Native American Studies  
Montana State University. Bozeman





## Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and honor, with respect, the indigenous Nations on whose traditional homelands the University now stands and whose historical relationships with the land continues to this day. We ask the spiritual ancestors to forgive our intrusion and humbly ask for their guidance.

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## ***Acknowledgements***

Our WINHEC Accreditation Steering Committee comprises the following individuals, who have been coming together over the months and years to carry this work forward: Walter Fleming, NAS Department Head; Jill Mackin, Native Land Project Fellow and doctoral candidate in History; NAS Associate Professors Matt Herman and Kristin Ruppel; Rachel Tang, NAS Graduate Program Coordinator; Lisa Stevenson, NAS Business Operations Manager; Lisa Perry, Director, AI/AN Student Support Services; Nicholas Ross-Dick, AI/AN Student Support Services Program Coordinator; Sweeney Windchief, Education Leadership Associate Professor; NAS Masters candidates Patrick Jeffers, Erika Ross, Danielle Morrison; NAS Minor students Tillie Stewart, Danielle Antelope, Christen Falcon, Shelian Lame Bull; Education post-doc Catherine Johnson; AIH Cultural Design Liaison Major Robinson; Emeritus Professor Wayne Stein; former and current Katz Endowed Chairs Bill Yellowtail and Loren BirdRattler.

## ***Introduction***

This document was co-created in a file digitally shared among 17 individuals who represent our core Steering Committee. Some or all of these individuals met weekly throughout the period of May 2018 through January 2020. The work reflected in this document is representative of an indigenized process which includes multiple generations, undergraduate and graduate students, staff, faculty and administrators, among whom are representatives of a broad diversity of Native nations, and a consensus-based decision making process. The writing herein reflects on the work of the Department of Native American Studies and its present state of alignment with the philosophy, mission, and vision as determined in collaboration with Native communities of Montana in the production of the WINHEC Eligibility Application.

In broad terms, NAS holds space for Indigeneity at MSU, and reciprocally in our communities, Bozeman, Native nations, Montana, and society. We are committed to the continuation and robust expression of Indigenous identity, culture, lifeways, sovereignty, and presence. In holding space for such expression, we are creating opportunities for community-building, identity work, cultural and spiritual practice, intergenerational activities, cross-cultural understanding, and Native knowledge recovery, transference, and activation within this Western academic setting. Through our dedication to this work, we as students, staff, and faculty, are making this educational setting more Indigenous, and, at once, opening a space for our Indigenous students to find, maintain, and/or express their own ways of being, doing, and knowing.



## Organizational Authority and Structure

### *1.1 Authority to Operate*

It is not known who the first Native student was to enroll at Montana State University (MSU), nor when. We do not know who the first Native person to walk across a stage to receive a degree from MSU. We can only imagine he or she was lonely, but seeking an education to help his or her People. Our mission, as a Department, is to see to it that no Native student should “go it alone” or be alienated by the institution that he or she has entrusted with his or her education.

The Department of Native American Studies traces its origins to 1966 when the then president of Montana State University, Bozeman (MSU) hired a counselor/advisor for the growing number of Native students enrolling at MSU. Dr. Dan Voyich, originally from Montenegro (of the former Yugoslavia), spoke English as a second language while practicing his Serbo-Croatian culture. It has always been said that Dan’s passion for helping Native students for over 30 years was driven by his own experiences trying to navigate a foreign culture.

In 1974, the Center for Native American Studies (CNAS) was created and the first courses under the NAS acronym were offered. Since that time, a non-teaching minor in Native

American Studies and a Masters of Arts in Native American Studies were established. In 2004, the Center for Native American Studies was granted departmental status by action of the Montana Board of Regents.

The Department of Native American Studies is housed in the College of Letters and Science, one of nine colleges at Montana State University. A challenge, but an honor unique to Native American Studies is that we are charged with providing services to all Native students, regardless of their academic home. NAS provides tutorial assistance, short-term loans and counseling services to a large number of the over 700 Native students on campus. The Department of Native American Studies provides indigenous perspective and considers it one of its main tasks to reflect that perspective in all departmental activities and dealings. The Department was provisionally accredited by the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) in 2008, and was the first institution of its kind to seek WINHEC accreditation. Also unique to Native American Studies is that, through our research, teaching and service, our faculty and staff acknowledge a duty to support tribal sovereignty and indigenous self-determination.

### *1.2 Mission and Goals*

Montana State University embraces and supports the traditions and heritage of our Native American students, faculty and staff, and we are committed to improving and expanding opportunities for American Indian students and communities. The Department of Native American Studies was established to provide and advance quality education for and about American Indians of Montana, the region, and the nation. In fulfilling this mission, the Department is committed to meet the changing needs of Montana's Native nations and all Montana citizens through excellence in teaching, research, and service. Native American Studies has assumed a uniquely broad responsibility to serve a number of constituencies. In doing so, it is committed to a balance in its four major roles: teaching, research, public service, and student services. In its academic program, the

## CASE IN POINT

The Department's efforts to get the University to institutionalize our **Indigenous Research Initiative** at a high level is a direct outcome of Elders Council members' critiques and conversations with members of the President's Executive Council, particularly with the Vice President of Research and Economic Development (then), Dr. Renee Reijo Pera. Her replacement, Vice President of Research Economic Development and Graduate Education, Dr. Jason Carter, is an enthusiastic supporter of this Initiative, which will likely find its institutional home under his office's auspices, as an Indigenous research center or institute. We will propose and seek approval for this from the MUS Board of Regents in 2020-2021.

Department provides concentrated study through an undergraduate non-teaching minor, a graduate certificate in Native American Studies and a Master of Arts degree in Native American Studies. Students in any major can also gain a multicultural perspective through NAS offerings in the University's core curriculum. The Department, through its research and other creative efforts, actively pursues interdisciplinary scholarship in the field of Native American Studies. At the same time, the faculty seeks opportunities to develop programs which address the needs of its campus and off-campus constituencies. In its service function, the department has a special responsibility to Indigenous nations, communities and organizations to assist self-directed educational, socioeconomic, cultural, and community development. In addition to fulfilling the traditional role of an academic unit, Native American Studies also assumes a commitment to the educational advancement of Native people and in doing so, the Department performs a vital student service function to increase the academic achievement and retention of Native American students at Montana State University. Native American Studies reflects an Indigenous voice in the University's teaching, research, and service functions. In pursuing its mission and goals, the Department will continue to serve as a vital link between the University and Indigenous people/s.

### *1.3 Oversight Board*

On February 12th, 2020, the NAS Department will convene an inaugural meeting of its Oversight Board in accordance with WINHEC's accreditation authority. Membership of the NAS Oversight Board overlaps with MSU's existing Council of Elders (see below), as well as with a newly forming **Indigenous Research Council**. It will have representation from each of the 7 reservations plus the Little Shell Tribe (a recently federally recognized nation), as well as representation from Montana's urban Native communities, and from Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students at MSU.

To date, we have functioned under a Western-style Board of Regents, which has "full power, responsibility, and authority to supervise, coordinate, manage and control the Montana University System [of which Montana State University is a part]." The Board consists of seven members appointed by the Governor of Montana, and confirmed by the Senate, to 7-year overlapping terms.<sup>1</sup> While indigenous representation on the Board of Regents is not guaranteed, its current chair, Casey Lozar, is an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, one of Montana's most prosperous Indigenous nations. A former board member, Major Robinson, is an enrolled member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, and has

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<sup>1</sup> Montana Board of Regents, <https://mus.edu/board/>.

served as an integral member of our WINHEC Accreditation Steering Committee as well as MSU's Cultural Liaison for the new American Indian Hall.



Photo: Dr. Henrietta Mann, Councilwoman, MSU Council of Elders

## MSU Council of Elders

Since 2004, we have reported to and received ongoing advice on academics, Native student **well-being, research,** and a host of other issues from MSU's Council of Elders. Originally convened by former MSU President Geoff Gamble, the Council's charge is to advise the Office of MSU's President. It includes Indigenous representation from all 7 reservations and formally meets twice per year: once in the fall, and once in the spring during the week before the annual American Indian Council Powwow, now in its 45th year.<sup>2</sup> It does not have voting authority over the NAS Department, but does carry substantial moral authority.

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<sup>2</sup> 45th Annual American Indian Council Powwow, <https://www.montana.edu/aic/powwow/>.



Photo: Inaugural Council of Elders meeting at MSU, November 2004<sup>3</sup>

Back row, left to right: Second AI/AN Student Success Services Dir. Jim Burns (N. Cheyenne), Tommy Thompson (Blackfeet), Louis Adams (Salish), Linwood Tallbull (N. Cheyenne), Dr. Russell Stands Over Bull (Crow), NAS Dept. Head Dr. Walter Fleming (Kickapoo), former MSU President Geoff Gamble, Jeremy Stands Over Bull (Crow); Middle row, left to right: Mary Lukin (Blackfeet), Minerva Allen (Assiniboine), Dr. Henrietta Mann (S. Cheyenne), Miss Indian Montana-Carmen Morales (Fort Belknap), Indian Club supporter Gloria McMurray; Front row, left to right: Corky Bush, MSU Office of Institutional Equity; Dr. Brad Hall (Blackfeet).

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<sup>3</sup> "MSU president convenes inaugural council of Montana tribal elders", <https://www.montana.edu/news/2020/msu-president-convenes-inaugural-council-of-montana-tribal-elders>.

## 1.4 Leadership/Person-in-Charge

[Adapted from NAS Self Study 2009]

The Head of the NAS Department is responsible for providing leadership and seeking excellence in the teaching, research, extension and service activities of the department. He or she is responsible for representing the needs and accomplishments of the department to the Dean of the College of Letters and Science and, if requested, the rest of the University. The Department Head reports directly to the Dean, and provides oversight for all of the fiscal, academic, and personnel affairs of the department.



Photo: Dr. Walter C. Fleming, Head of the Department of Native American Studies

The person who oversees the Native American Studies Program is its director and Head of the Department Dr. Walter C. Fleming. An enrolled Kickapoo of Kansas, Fleming was born at Crow Agency, Montana and raised on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, Montana. He is a traditional native dancer and a member of the Gourd Dance Society, a traditional society of the Southern Plains. Walter Fleming has taught American Indian history and culture courses at the university for more than 40 years and is a specialist in Northern Plains Indian culture and American Indian Literature. Fleming is also

associate curator of the Native American collection at the Museum of the Rockies, Bozeman. His doctoral degree is in American Studies from the University of Kansas. The title of his dissertation is *American Indians and Federal Land Leasing Policies, 1884-1917: "That Beauty of Cultivation and Thrift Which Always Grows Out of American Energy."* Fleming is the author of numerous book chapters and articles and is the co-editor of a book entitled *Visions of an Enduring People*. He is a strong advocate for the advancement and development of programs and projects that support academic achievement of students and foster relations with other institutions and tribal colleges as well as promote community outreach. He is committed to Indigenous education and is knowledgeable in American Indian cultural studies and American Indian history. His 2003 book *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Native American History* (part of "The Complete Idiot's Guide to" series) is well-known and used in courses in Native American Studies. Reviews of his book are proof of that "It's certainly filling a void in textbooks that are used in Native American studies classes," said Henrietta Mann, Katz Endowed Chair of Native American Studies at MSU from 2000 to 2003. She continues, "This, as far as I'm concerned, presents a very comprehensive view of American Indian history." Professor Fleming has written on a

variety of topics, including federal Indian history and policy, affirmative action, contemporary issues, American Indian literature and the impact of the Lewis and Clark Expedition on Montana tribes. In 2013, his accomplishments were recognized with the Governor's Humanities Award, "the highest honor in the state that recognizes achievement in humanities scholarship, service and enhancement of public appreciation of the humanities."<sup>4</sup> Whether shepherding the NAS Department's development as the stable center of Native scholarship and student support on campus, or guiding the ground-breaking establishment of MSU's newest building, the temporarily named "American Indian Hall," Fleming's steady leadership attests to the importance of putting Indigenous cultural and spiritual values out front.<sup>5</sup>

### *1.5 Leadership and Decision Making*

As pointed out elsewhere, an ongoing challenge in the long-running (50+ year) effort to provide culturally grounded higher education for Native students at MSU is the diversity of Indigenous communities served, and the distance of those communities from Bozeman (where MSU is located). The closest reservation (Crow/Apsaalooke) is a three hour drive. To meet that challenge, the NAS Department has developed or supported the development of a number of programs over the years aimed at providing a "home away from Home" for Indigenous students who choose to come to MSU. For many years, these 'programs'--like student support itself--were labors of love that grew out of the commitment of individuals like Dan Voyich, and his successor, Jim Burns. When Jim left after more than 15 years in this position, he reminisced: "It's bittersweet. I was trying to count how many native students have graduated that I've played a part with. It's probably over 800. I have been from the courtroom to the emergency room to the school board to be an advocate for MSU's Indian students. I feel privileged to have that level of trust."<sup>6</sup> Now, to meet the growing population of Native students at MSU, three people provide the services that Jim Burns used to, and still do so out of love.

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<sup>4</sup> Family values: MSU's Native enrollment and programs grow under Walter Fleming's compassionate care <http://www.montana.edu/news/mountainsandminds/archives/spring-2016.html>

<sup>5</sup> MSU announces \$12 million gift toward \$20 million American Indian Hall, <https://www.msuaaf.org/s/1584/index.aspx?sid=1584&gid=1&pgid=3842&cid=6511&ecid=6511&crd=0&calpgid=61&calcid=6670>.

<sup>6</sup> "Our rock' – MSU Indian students say Burns will be tough to replace," [https://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/news/montana\\_state\\_university/our-rock-msu-indian-students-say-burns-will-be-tough/article\\_21c0304a-61c3-11e1-bbb9-001871e3ce6c.html](https://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/news/montana_state_university/our-rock-msu-indian-students-say-burns-will-be-tough/article_21c0304a-61c3-11e1-bbb9-001871e3ce6c.html).

Besides our committed staff and faculty members, we depend on the coordinated leadership of the MSU Council of Elders. The Council of Elders meets at MSU in the spring and fall for intensive day-long sessions with administrators, faculty, staff and students, but members of the Council are available to NAS's (and University) leadership throughout the year. Additionally, Council of American Indian Programs or CAIP<sup>7</sup> (formerly Indian Project Directors, or IPD) members meet on campus on a monthly basis to report on opportunities and issues of importance to Native students, NAS faculty and staff, and others who run Native-student serving organizations (see Appendix A for more information on the origins of CAIP). In early 2018, a group of MSU faculty started meeting outside of CAIP to discuss issues specific to research with Native communities. This group, calling itself Common Threads Network of Indigenous Communities' Research Partners<sup>8</sup>, has been meeting monthly under the coordination of Dr. Elizabeth Bird, Project Development and Grants Specialist in the College of Health & Human Development, Dean's Office. Faculty, staff, and students from Native American Studies have presented numerous times to this group to gain an understanding of **Indigenous research-related** challenges and activities across campus, and to help cultivate a more widespread understanding of, and appreciation for Indigenous research methodologies and protocols as these are expressed by our Indigenous constituencies. And most recently, the **Indigenous Research Initiative** is establishing an Indigenous board of directors representing each reservation on questions of ethical research with Native communities, and data sovereignty (among other things).

The NAS Department, we always say, has "two sides of the house"--academics and student success--however this does not begin to capture the work that the NAS Department does in Native communities, across campus, in the community of Bozeman, and the state of Montana. Unlike non-native academic programs and student success programs, we hold space for our ways of being, doing, and seeing through our visibility as a hub for inter-tribal research, learning, and cultural activity. Our staff and students are the "go-to's" for all things native whether that is to inform a high school student's school project on native culture, a relevant bill in the state legislature, or a multi-million dollar research proposal involving native communities. Our staff and students pray, sing, and bless native and non-native events, provide hospitality for visitors and serve as ambassadors for a vast array of occasions to build cross-cultural understanding. We are here to 'represent' and that is perhaps our most significant leadership role--one which draws our staff and students together with purpose and strengthens our bonds with one another in ways other university programs may not

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<sup>7</sup> Council of American Indian Programs, <http://www.montana.edu/native/caip.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Common Threads Network, <https://www.montana.edu/calendar/events/27695>.

experience. Within our commitment to building cross-cultural enrichment through showing-up as ourselves, lies the desire for cross-cultural understanding and the possibility of healing the wounds of colonization in the broader community. By giving students opportunities to represent in the community, speaking with classes on campus and in the local school district or at community events, we are making room for students to fulfill their **well-being** model concept of “engaging” and “reciprocating”--these are opportunities to represent, present research, share Indigenous worldviews and spirituality, teach, and lead.

Through the NAS Native Land Project, founded three years ago, Blackfeet, Crow, Northern Cheyenne, Yakama and Ojibwe students, at both MSU and tribal colleges, have participated in research projects that contribute to water sovereignty, food sovereignty and security, Indigenous land planning and conservation, treaty rights, and restorative agriculture practices. While conducting research under the Native Land Project these students have learned critical ‘soft’ skills in working with Native nations, and hard skills that are transferable to future creative work and to their own communities. They have also learned (if they didn’t know it already) the immense value of relationship and reciprocity in Indigenous contexts. This is the point where Indigenous student **well-being** and Indigenous community **well-being** merge through critical capacity building at a human resource level and the production of Indigenous applied research done to, by, for and with Indigenous people.



Photo: MSU's Bobcat Singers sing at the 2019 Indigenous People's Round Dance

## Future Directions

The new American Indian Hall and ongoing outreach efforts around its design and purposes present exciting prospects for several areas where the leadership and engagement of our constituent communities is absolutely necessary. For example:

- Native Land Project partnerships: In terms of **Indigenous research** programs and our ability to offer students opportunities to develop hard and soft skills (e.g., our Indigenous Planning<sup>9</sup> course) relevant to Indigenous communities, we are cultivating new partnerships modeled on the existing one with the Amskapi Piikani (Blackfeet)<sup>10</sup>. We look forward to working with Indigenous communities throughout the region to, for example, make projects like our Trust Land Owner Guides,

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<sup>9</sup> Indigenous Planning course, Native Land Project, <http://www.montana.edu/nativeland/courses.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Amskapi Piikani (Blackfeet) partnership, <http://www.montana.edu/nativeland/AmskapiPiikani.html>.

developed with Blackfeet landowners and subject matter experts, translational in other Native contexts, as well.<sup>11</sup>

- **Indigenous Research Initiative:** In order to achieve the institutional transformation necessary for true partnerships that benefit *and are led by* Native communities and Indigenous students, we are working to build consensus across campus around *Inclusive Teaching, Mentoring, and Research: Co-creating an Indigenous "home away from Home" at MSU.*<sup>12</sup> (See, also, Appendix E)
- **Buffalo Nations Food System Initiative:** If we are to create academic programming that truly creates a "home away from Home" for our students, then we must follow the lead of Indigenous communities in recreating their own food systems. Montana State University already has food security assets and the ability to join capacity with native nations who are establishing their own food *sovereignty*.
- **WINHEC Accreditation:** The collective process of working through the WINHEC accreditation review is, in and of itself, transformative. We look forward to walking this path together with a global Indigenous community of leaders.

## 1.6 Institutional/Program Integrity

Our first point of integrity is to Indigeneity and the sovereignty of Indigenous nations. We are first and foremost accountable to ourselves, meaning the Native nations we serve and to whom we have established authority 1) in the MSU Elders Council (historically) 2) through our collaboration with those communities in establishing the indigenous standards of our Eligibility Application, and 3) most recently the newly founded Indigenous Advisory Council. As Indigenous people, we recognize the vast breadth of what it means to be Indigenous in the 21st century and the many Nations to whom we are responsible. While we are living in a context of embeddedness in a colonial system of authority, we strive to respectfully express Indigeneity and sovereignty in all aspects of our work. An example of how this translates to student **well-being**, lies in the expression of Indigenous spirituality and spiritual practices as a vital and non-negotiable aspect of our programming. Because Indigenous worldviews are holistic vs. the compartmentalization of Western ways of knowing, spirituality is not something that can be checked at the door of the university. By permitting students to include spirituality

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<sup>11</sup> See our Trust Land Owners Guide, developed in partnership with Amskapi Piikani and Native Land Project, at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RCBjjZeunka7NHeeRtWo8WSS2EosqRl/view?usp=sharing>.

<sup>12</sup> Inclusive Teaching, Mentoring, and Research: Co-creating an Indigenous "home away from Home" at MSU, <http://www.montana.edu/diversity/resources/facultystaff/Inclusivenativeprogram.html>.

in the settings of education, research and community events, we are creating space for Indigenous holism. This is not the standard operating procedure in the state university system, but due to our persistence has become widely accepted, even expected. This is also a delicate matter because we do not want to exploit spiritual practices and fall into pageantry. Further, we are faced with the challenges of embracing many Nations' ways of believing and practicing. We try to avoid pan-Indianism while also not assuming that our Indigenous students embrace Indigenous spiritual practices. Instead, we honor spirituality by allowing for a variety of teachers and speakers to lead prayer and ceremony. NAS has for several decades held designated space for sweat lodges at an MSU Agricultural Research Station on the eastern side of the Gallatin Valley. The lodges that have been built there over the years have been informally run and were governed by the authority of the Indigenous student or community member who held those teachings and constructed the lodge. In other words, the governing authority on this work and spiritual opportunity for students, is indigenous. Students have been informally invited to participate much in the same way that we offer pipe ceremonies, prayers, and smudging opportunities throughout our programming.



Photo: Members of the American Indian Council march during the Women's March (2018)

Another example of Indigenous authority and integrity is found in student activism. As it always has been, activism is a guaranteed constant of amongst Indigenous peoples as we strive for opportunities that bring life, de-colonize society, and build **well-being** for our lands and peoples. NAS students organize around issues that matter to them, find their voices, and

step out as part of their Indigenous student lives at MSU. Shared work for justice is something the American Indian Club students find important. This student work is an expression of Indigenous authority and sovereignty. As advisers to students, we often have to watch out for their life balance between academics and activism while also acknowledging the inherent nature of Indigenous activism in the colonial context.

The Native American Studies Department at MSU maintains and is striving to indigenize itself from within a multi-layered structure of local, state, and regional demands. Our positionality requires a disposition of diplomacy and continual communication with the goal of building cross-cultural understanding while advocating for the indigenization of research partnerships and learning spaces within the dominant structure. This is a challenge we embrace with hope built on the work of those who have come before to clear a path for Indigenous students and their important work conducted at MSU.

At the regional level, MSU is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), “an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education, since 1932.”<sup>13</sup> The NWCCU accredits the institution as a whole, and issued its most recent reaffirmation of MSU’s accreditation in 2018, where it lists several recommendations including identifying “more meaningful” measurable indicators of achievement than it had previously done. We see our longstanding relationship with WINHEC and the achievement of full accreditation as the way in which we will fulfill this recommendation and, as we have discovered through the meaningful communication that the Self Study process has generated across campus and with our Native community members, identify success according to indigenous indicators.

Montana State University, an entity of the Montana University System, operates under the oversight and authority of the Governor, State Legislature, and the State Board of Regents in cooperation with the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. Within the State structure, the governance and administration of the Montana University System--including Montana State University--is vested with the Montana Board of Regents, which has full power, responsibility, and authority to supervise, coordinate, manage and control the Montana University System, including funding allocations and programmatic approval. The Board consists of seven members appointed by the Governor, and confirmed by the Senate, to seven year overlapping terms. One of the members of the board is a student appointed by the Governor who is registered full-time at a unit of higher education under jurisdiction of the

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<sup>13</sup> MSU Accreditation, <http://catalog.montana.edu/accreditation/>.

board. The Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Commissioner of Higher Education are ex-officio members of the Board.

The Office of the University President, currently Waded Cruzado, and her Executive Committee, report directly to the Board of Regents, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (see Figure 1).

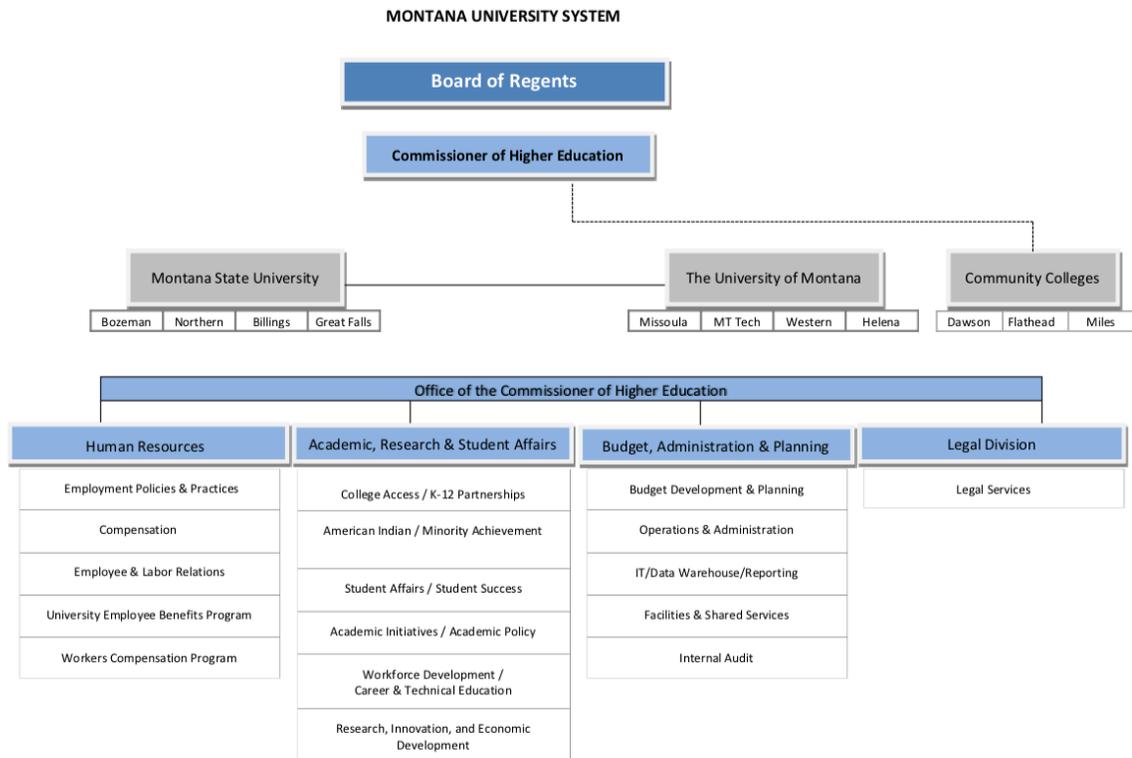


Figure 1: Montana University System organizational chart

From this structure, flows the authority of the system in which we work. However, while the system considers the situatedness of American Indian students in the state system of education, including through the state constitutional mandate of *Indian Education for All*, we have a role and a position of authority in speaking for Indigenous education values and objectives. While our authority is ad hoc, not written into the system, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, represented by Angela McClean, current Director of American Indian / Minority Achievement and K-12 Partnerships, consults with us, soliciting the input of our Head of Department and faculty, on various initiatives of her work. In the case of the application of *Indian Education for All* at the higher education level, we have been involved in the work that the Commissioner’s office has begun in applying this mandate to the Montana University System. We represent at this level, and while frustrated with the pace of

change, respectfully seek understanding and opportunities to advocate for progress in Indigenization of our programs, communities, and leadership. We advocate for funding of such initiatives and present an Indigenous view of what creating space for Indigenous learners and researchers in this system looks like.

The MSU President, as advised by the Tribal Elders Council and acting under the authority of the State University System, is also guided by the MSU Strategic Plan, a document renewed every five years (to see the origins of our first Strategic Plan, see Appendix A). At the institutional level, as with all academic programs, NAS is also governed by the MSU strategic plan, which was last renewed in response to NWCCU's 2018 recommendations. In its 2019 "Year One [of seven] Mission and Core Themes Report,"<sup>14</sup> MSU includes this new strategic plan, called "Choosing Promise."<sup>15</sup> While the plan has many merits, of immediate relevance to the Department of Native American Studies are the following goals, to: "Broaden access for underrepresented populations and increase academic success for all students through excellence in undergraduate education" (Goal 1.1); "Enhance the significance and impact of scholarship" (Goal 2.1); and "Increase mutually beneficial collaborations with Tribal nations and partners" (Goal 3.1). Goal 3.1, in particular, provides NAS with the impetus--along with the Department's work toward accreditation with WINHEC--to push for commitments at the college and university levels that have heretofore not been possible.

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<sup>14</sup> Year One Mission and Core Themes Report, [http://www.montana.edu/accreditation/documents/msu\\_mission\\_and\\_core\\_themes\\_report\\_3.1.2019\\_remediated.pdf](http://www.montana.edu/accreditation/documents/msu_mission_and_core_themes_report_3.1.2019_remediated.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Choosing Promise, MSU Strategic Plan, <http://www.montana.edu/strategicplan/>.



Photo: A group of Native students from NASX 415/515 (2018) provide feedback on the development of MSU's new strategic plan to Dr. Tami Eitle, Vice Provost for Curriculum, Accreditation and Assessment. NAS faculty members and students tried to get the University Planning committee to raise its "Tribal collaborations" goal to the level of an "Intentional Focus" in MSU's strategic plan, but were unsuccessful. On the other hand, we also encouraged our students to speak up at Planning committee meetings, and believe that student voices, in particular, were one of the reasons that the tribal partnerships language received as much attention in the plan as it did.

We feel fortunate that we live in a State in which the constitution mandates *Indian Education for All (IEFA)*. This is reflected in our models of Standards (see Figure 2, below) and **Student Wellbeing** (see NAS Eligibility Application, p.11), as we have long recognized and embraced an allegiance to the **IEFA** mandate under Article X of the State’s 1972 Constitution, codified at MCA 20-1-501 as the Indian Education for All Act of 1999.

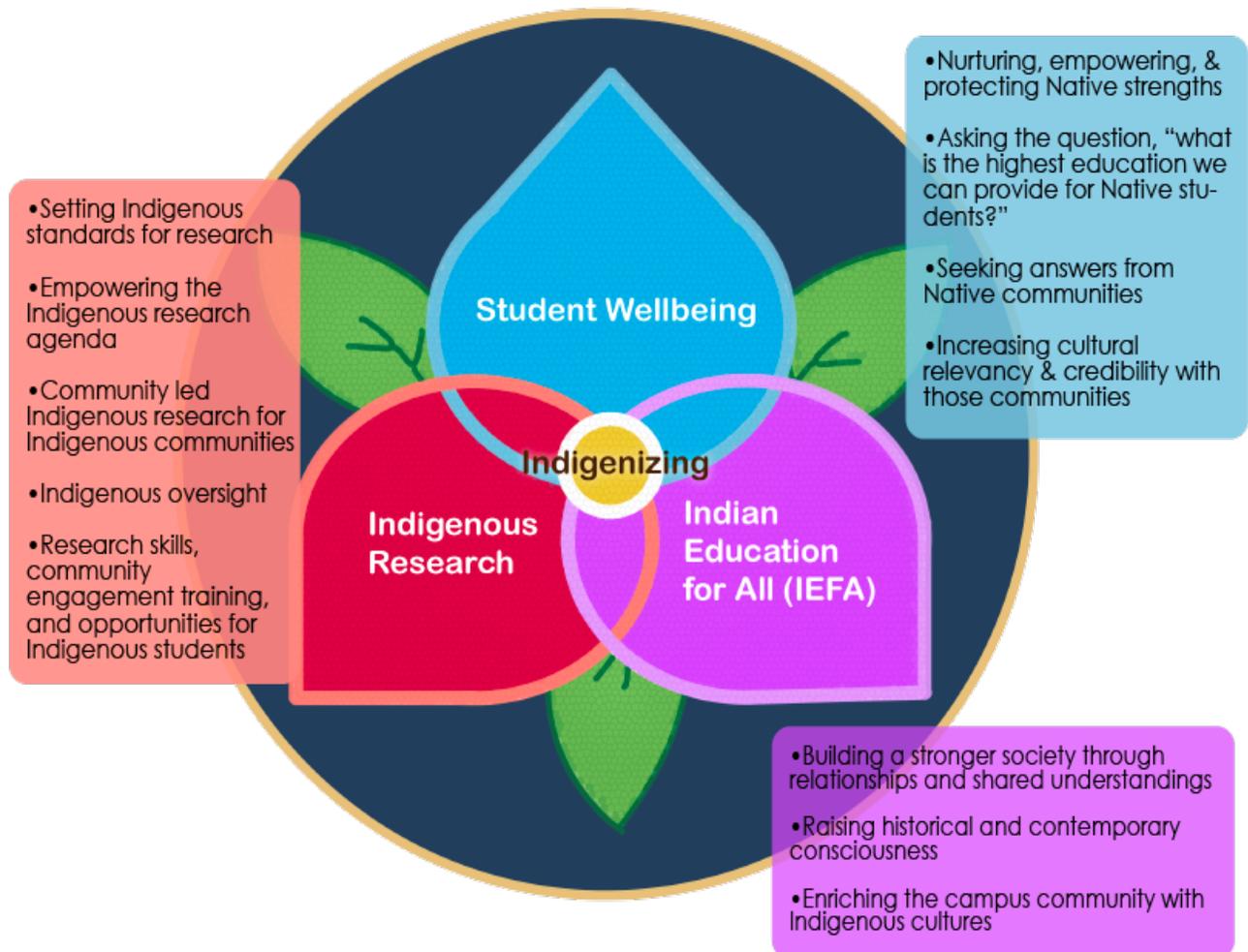


Figure 2: Our Standards

Though the **IEFA** mandate has in many ways been a ‘toothless tiger’ for those entities not already committed to “the preservation of [Indigenous] cultural integrity” (1972 Montana Constitution, Art. X, Sec. 1(2)), the NAS Department has consistently worked to integrate the IEFA’s Tribally-developed “7 Essential Understandings” (see Eligibility Application, pp. 23-24)

into its coursework. For example, Professor Matt Herman has worked the **IEFA** into several of his courses, not just as a reading but as a framework of analysis (see NAS sample syllabi, Appendix I). In these courses, student assignments and essay questions on exams frequently ask students to name and define the 7 Essential Understandings and then apply them to readings and films. The NAS Department has also advocated that others do so across the curriculum and the grades (K-20), for example, by supporting the work of scholars like Jioanna Carjuzaa.<sup>16</sup> Professor Carjuzaa, MSU Department of Education, has written numerous scholarly articles on the **IEFA**, developed and hosted (with NAS co-sponsorship) more than 20 professional development conferences and workshops on it, and frequently teaches courses in Native American Studies (as well as in her home Department of Education), including one developed specifically for K-12 teachers called NASX 554 Indian Education for All: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Practice. Additionally, NAS Department Head Walter Fleming has worked closely with MSU's Senior Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Ariel Donahue and Angela McLean, Director of American Indian/Minority Achievement and K-12 Partnerships in Montana's Office of Public Instruction to support the development of a new **IEFA** course for faculty/staff professional development across the Montana University System (including MSU)<sup>17</sup>. The new course was rolled out in fall 2019, with the expectation that all faculty and staff at MSU are to complete it. Annual evaluations will measure the extent to which MSU employees comply with this mandate.

At its heart, the Indian Education for All mandate is aimed at raising social consciousness, or cross-cultural understanding, of Native American cultures and histories. Our vigorous involvement as advocates, consultants, presenters, and instructors, across campus programs and curricula, helps build that increased consciousness. However, in general, we know that there is not enough of us--faculty, staff, and students--to tell those stories and build cross-cultural understanding. In recent times, a growing community of allies from other departments are helping with this effort. Examples of this momentum in consciousness raising are: 1) a recent and enthusiastically-attended workshop on "Indigenizing your Syllabus," hosted by the Center of Faculty Excellence, and 2) the momentum gathering around two newly established entities the Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion position and the **Indigenous Research Initiative** of the NAS. Due to this growing momentum, a series of events, like the workshop mentioned, are slated for the coming academic year. They will include many opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to grow in awareness of what creating space for Indigenous education and research looks like.

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<sup>16</sup> Jioanna Carjuzaa, <https://www.montana.edu/carjuzaa/iefa/index-1.html>.

<sup>17</sup> See Indian Education for All in Montana for One MUS, at <http://www.montana.edu/iefa/>.

At the convergence of our standards is the “space” to which we commonly refer in this discussion--the indigenized space of education and research. That space is what the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples refers to as the right to educate our children in their own cultures and languages. Creating that space, just as with the work of decolonizing, is not only the job of indigenous folks. Much of the good that has happened in support of Native American students, education, and research in this predominantly white institution, MSU, has happened with the support of non-native allies and advocates. We are humbled by work that we have been able to achieve together, however we also feel the need to continue to advocate for the Indigenous voices to lead the work. This is particularly evident in the realm of research.

With the goal explicitly stated in MSU’s strategic plan to “increase mutually beneficial collaborations with Tribal nations and partners,” we see increased opportunities to advocate outside of our own department for a more direct alignment with the State’s IEFA mandate on the one hand, and with our own strategic goals and objectives, on the other, particularly as we strive to meet the standards of **Indigenous student wellbeing**, **the IEFA**, and **Indigenous research**. Montana State University is designated as a university with very high research activity by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research’s Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. MSU is one of 131 universities nationwide – out of 4,338 U.S. higher education institutions – to be included in this category. Of the funding that supports that research activity, approximately \$26 million involves tribal partnerships (Office of Sponsored Programs, MSU). Our contention is--and the MSU administration agrees--that a percentage of that funding should go toward supporting Indigenous peoples’ right to say how those research dollars get distributed, to whom, in what manner, and for what purposes.

## Future Directions

We feel that with the evolving **Indigenous Research Initiative** (which helps MSU reach its objectives in support of its strategic plan Goal 3.1), we can now begin to grapple seriously with one of the longstanding critiques of the MSU Council of Elders, advisors to the MSU Office of the President: that MSU as a whole must become more responsive to the needs of Native communities. Through the **Indigenous Research Initiative (IRI)**, we have created a way to do that in partnership with those communities, themselves, through increased levels of outreach, new program development, and university-level commitments to creating and maintaining ethical, equitable research partnerships wherever they are desired by Tribes and Native communities.

For several years we have been seeking to establish an **Indigenous Research Initiative** at MSU to help raise awareness around Tribal research priorities, protocols, and ethical, equitable forms of research partnerships. In 2014, we developed a Working Group on **Indigenous Research** and, with affiliates in the Department of Education and the Office of International Programs, submitted a proposal for the university to award “research expansion” funds as seed money to develop an Indigenous Research & Leadership Institute (IRLI). That proposal was not funded, but is evidence of ongoing efforts to bring Indigenous perspectives into the university setting, not just in Native American Studies but across the disciplines and at all levels of governance (See Appendix D). Prior to the IRLI proposal were Bill Yellowtail’s 2011 outreach efforts in developing a Tribally-informed Research Protocol Guide (see Eligibility Application, pp. 20-22 and Appendix C). Bill’s work resurfaced during our early advocacy around the current **Indigenous Research Initiative (IRI)**, and is helping to animate and drive the IRI at the administrative (college and university) levels, as well as with students and partners representing Indigenous Nations all around Montana. One of the first tasks of the representatives selected from the Native nations of Montana, Wyoming, and the region to lead the IRI, is to re-evaluate the indigenous research standards which were developed by Montana native nations under the guidance of Bill Yellowtail, consultant to MSU President Waded Cruzado, and to ensure that those standards receive institutional authority to govern the way that MSU does research “business” with tribal partners. For more on the **Indigenous Research Initiative**, see Section 2.5, Future Directions as well as Appendix E.

Finally, in order to better support Native students, staff and faculty wherever they find themselves at MSU, we seek to expand our options for expressing and practicing Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, including spiritual practices which aren’t usually an outwardly expressed aspect of academic life. The sweat lodges mentioned above offer one such option, but we think we can do better, and are actively seeking a more appropriate (more private) setting on university owned land near a local hot springs.



## Educational Programming

### 2.1 Educational Programs

(adapted from Tillie Stewart)

NAS educational programming tends to be interdisciplinary, geared for students who plan to work for a nation or in other related professional employment. As such, NAS programs require core competency in some specific areas, but allow students to pick and choose from a wide variety of courses focused (broadly) in history, literature, culture, and contemporary issues. The Department offers:

- Undergraduate Minor in Native American Studies (21 credits)
  - The NAS Minor program includes 3 required courses: Introduction to Native American Studies (3 credits); Montana Indian Culture, History and Current Issues (3 credits); and Federal Indian Law and Policy (3 credits). Beyond these 9 required credits, students choose 12 elective credits in their areas of their choice.
- Graduate Certificate in Native American Studies (12 credits, available online or in person)
  - The NAS Graduate Certificate program requires a course in Federal Indian Law and Policy (3 credits). Otherwise, students may choose from a variety of courses available either online or in person.

- The Graduate Certificate option was developed primarily to serve tribal college constituents (instructors who might want to earn a postgraduate degree but can't afford to leave their community or job in order to do so), and K-12 teachers required by Montana state law to comply with the Indian Education for All Act. Though the Certificate has served its intended constituencies, it has also served as a conduit, bringing new students into the NAS Masters program.
  - Students can transfer up to 9 Certificate credits to their Masters program, should they choose to do so.
- Masters of Arts in Native American Studies (30 credits)
  - The NAS Masters program requires a course in Federal Indian Law and Policy (3 credits), as well as in the praxis of NAS theory and **Indigenous research** methodologies (6 credits). The latter course (NASX 542) includes a requirement that students spend time (to the extent possible) in the Indigenous community where they seek to do research. Beyond these required credits, students have broad latitude to focus their studies in areas relevant to their interests and community needs



Photo: Native and non-Native MSU students working with Native Land Project, breaking bread together at the Junction Cafe in Browning, MT, on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. Left to right: Micaela Young, doctoral candidate, MSU American Studies, currently serves as development director for Intertribal Agriculture Council; Kurrie Small (Apsaalooke/Crow), NAS Minor 2010 and Native Land Project intern; Meri Gobert (Amskapi Piikani/Blackfeet), NAS MA, 2017 and Native Land Project intern.

The NAS Department's educational programming includes an undergraduate minor option in Native American Studies, a graduate certificate, and a Master of Arts in Native American Studies. All programs offered by the department require a course in Federal Indian Law and Policy. All are geared toward both Native and non-Native students with an interest in Native American Studies, or as preparation for work with tribal affairs to enhance their major area of study. Of the courses required for the minor option, the Introduction to Native American Studies class offers a survey of traditional and contemporary American Indian cultures, history, and current issues in Native communities. It also serves to fulfill one of the University's CORE 2.0 diversity course requirements. *Montana Indians: Cultures, Histories, Current Issues* builds on to the introductory course by providing students with a more local context of the tribes in Montana. This course focuses on the establishment of the seven reservations in Montana, treaties and agreements made with the federal government, rights of American Indians to contemporary Indian society, sovereignty, tribal governments, and socioeconomic issues. These courses give undergraduate students a broad overview of Native American historical and contemporary realities, with more specific focus on the Indigenous peoples of this area: their traditions, cultures, beliefs and experiences (For more information see Appendices G and I).

## Future Directions

Because seven reservations and thirteen tribes survived the settler colonialism that created the state of Montana, research interests that serve the surrounding Native communities are ever-present. Our ongoing work with **Indigenous research** partners, and with collaborators on campus will produce more opportunities for students to engage with Native people and issues relevant to Indigenous communities all over Montana and the region. For instance, a pilot Buffalo Nations Field School on the Blackfeet Reservation is emerging from collaborations between Blackfeet research partners, non-Native buffalo ranchers at Blackfeet, MSU's Institute on Ecosystems, and NAS's Native Land Project. Tentatively planned for summer 2020, it will bring to life a piece of the work envisioned by the Buffalo Nations Food System initiative (see Section 3.1). The buffalo culture food system is the longest sustained human lifeway on the North American continent. By working with Native knowledge keepers to facilitate the transference of food system knowledge, a new generation of knowledge holders will be equipped to carry the work of healthy and culturally appropriate food systems forward. In this model, Indigenous knowledge keepers lead the appropriate sharing of knowledge, and the research priorities of Montana's native nations direct relevant research done in partnership with MSU.

## 2.2 Indigenous Curriculum & Pedagogy

(adapted from Erika Ross)

Our curriculum across classes offered by NAS prioritizes Indigenous methodologies and epistemologies. The methodological practices we utilize across our classes is community focused scholarship representative of the many voices of the 13 Tribes of Montana. By centering Native voices in course readings and screenings, we prioritize the knowing, being, and doing of Indigenous communities. In NASX 232D Montana Indian Culture, History, and Current Issues, for example, we actively apply the 7 Essential Understandings of Montana's Indian Education for All as weekly modules throughout the class to learn about Montana tribes, other tribal nations across the U.S., and the complexities of Indigenous identities. We incorporate these standards into pedagogical practices in classrooms while encouraging students to use Indigenous methods and methodologies, such as the use and prioritization of decolonization theories and the centering of Native American perspectives, and how to use these to view intergenerational continuities.

In other classes, like NASX 415 Native Food Systems, we've Indigenized that course curricula by using a land-based pedagogy where students physically interact with place and knowledge. Similarly, in NASX 542 Research Praxis in Native American Studies, we've developed a class that focuses on Indigenous Theories and Methods, where formerly, Indigenous Theories and Indigenous Methodologies were split into two classes. By combining these classes into a comprehensive course that views both areas in tandem, we utilize teaching and learning methods that reflect our standards and best benefit our students. And, in NASX 570 Indigenous Planning, we co-developed a course *with* Indigenous community planners from the Blackfeet Nation, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and Fort Peck Indian Reservation, so that students would have the opportunity to learn directly from these experts as they grapple with today's complexities. Likewise, NASX 571 Native Grantsmanship offers students the opportunity to develop their own grant proposals, and evaluate those of their peers based on the real world criteria used among federal and private granting agencies.

Further, our participation in the University's Core Curriculum provides a unique opportunity for NAS to challenge stereotypes and to welcome aspiring allies across campus. As noted in our 2008 Self-Study, "through an interdisciplinary program of study in American Indian culture, history, policy, law, community affairs, education, and other related areas...The academic programs provide concentrated study in Native American Studies, as well as opportunities for all MSU students, at both the undergraduate and graduate level, to gain a multicultural perspective in meeting the University's core curriculum requirements" (MSU NAS Department

WINHEC Self-Study 2008, pp. 31-32).

## Future Directions

We know there are many ways that we can improve our support of Indigenous curriculum and pedagogy. One such way is to bolster each of our NAS classes with concepts from Montana's Indian Education for All, like the 7 Essential Understandings. By supporting the State's Constitutional Amendment to include "cultural enrichment, academic engagement, and equitable pedagogy for students" across all our available courses, we have an opportunity to set a higher standard for incorporating IEFA practices in higher education.<sup>18</sup> We hope that allies across other departments will follow suit, working to better incorporate IEFA in the classroom, making specific efforts to build a better education model for all Indigenous students.

We are also excited to be in talks with allies in disciplines like Sustainable Food Systems, Agriculture, and Earth Sciences, where we envision developing coursework and degree programs that are in direct response to the economic and health-related needs of Native communities.

As a continued part of our future directions, we're also incorporating a Drum Room and a Smudge Room in our new building, the American Indian Hall, because we recognize the need for such places to provide a spiritually supportive environment for students and community members. By doing this, we are also prioritizing Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing outside of the classroom. Supporting Indigenous curricula and pedagogy must extend beyond the classroom and into our community. We're working to prioritize that process in the new American Indian Hall (see Appendix F for more information on the building).

### *2.3 Indigenous Language & Culture*

(adapted from Pat Jeffers)

Currently, Blackfeet and Crow languages are offered at a beginner, non-credit bearing level. These classes are offered on a weekly basis and have large groups of attendees who come regularly, since attendance is compulsory after a student has begun taking the class. Instead of being offered for credit, these take the form of an on campus club. The instructors who teach these classes are members of those same communities whose languages they teach, who sometimes video call in to the classroom, or are physically in attendance. The classes themselves are student led, rather than having a pre-existing curriculum, each class being

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<sup>18</sup> Indian Education for All, <https://opi.mt.gov/Educators/Teaching-Learning/Indian-Education-for-All>.

based off what the students themselves want to learn in their language, which gives the class direction. Both oral practice and written worksheets are utilized throughout the courses. The student center even hired a part time staff member, tasked with the organization of these courses, so that no aspect of them would 'fall between the cracks', so to speak. While these language programs are just in their infancy, they are just the first steps to having a much more engaging and encompassing Indigenous language program on our campus.

Definite cultural values are taught to both native and non-native students through courses like NASX 105 *Introduction to Native American Studies*, and NASX 232 *Montana Tribes: Cultures, Histories, Current Issues* (see sample syllabi in Appendix I). Through these courses, the students not only learn the basics of the culture and history of the tribes around the country and in Montana, but also the shared aspects of culture and overarching history of the tribes in North America. The classes also present Indigenous cultures in a modern context, as opposed to specifically historical context. Through NASX 476/530 *Federal Indian Law & Policy*, students face the challenge of understanding the legal historical landscape through Indigenous eyes, and these perspectives are juxtaposed with the primary documents of American colonial history and contemporary realities.

Besides academic learning, numerous cultural programs are offered through the AI/AN SSS for the general and Native student populations on campus. These events happen with a degree of regularity both on campus and within the Native student center. Some examples of events that are sponsored by the center include: Sweetgrass braiding, where students are taught how to braid their own sweetgrass by fellow students and Indigenous members of the Bozeman community who bring in fresh grown sweetgrass for the students to braid and keep; and Bead and Feed, where, over dinner, students learn how to bead some basic patterns, letting them practice before going into more intricate or culturally specific beadwork patterns. The class is taught by students who volunteer and are competent artists in the craft, and who are willing to teach students who are only just beginning. This can be considered as a test of patience, but also shows the dedication and love of the community that encompasses our student center. The student center also offers occasional stick game nights, which teach students and immerse them in traditional stick games from all the tribes in Montana. And, it hosts a group of students called the Bobcat singers, who are invited to sing at many events all around campus, to promote awareness of our Indigenous student center and multiple Indigenous cultures on campus.

The AIC also works on cultural aspects of student **well-being**, as will be discussed below and is illustrated in figure 9. The goal is to support students in four areas: their Mental, Physical, Emotional and Spiritual **well-being**. The idea being that academic success depends on a holistic understanding of health. Being Native students at a predominantly white institution, there are a lot of issues that the students may find mentally and spiritually exhausting, which is where one-on-one student mentoring comes into play. Students who come into the office in need of support are met by staff members who are able to smudge them at any time, and who impart knowledge on how to maintain a healthy attitude. Staff members make the spiritual

aspects of life a routine, regularly smudging the office and making sure that students know they also are free to smudge whenever they need to.

All of this said, the student center is not the only place on campus that helps spread knowledge about Indigenous cultures. All around campus there are places that display artwork produced by native artists who are also students in various programs. In the Student Union Building, there is a hallway devoted to indigenous artwork, as well as other installations of indigenous art that can be found around campus, even in the campus's new parking garage. The culinary services on campus also help spread indigenous ways and cultures through the food that they offer. Through the 2018 school year, the school sponsored "Fork in the Road" food truck featured new, locally sourced indigenous foods every week that were open to purchase by the students on campus.<sup>19</sup> This allowed students to try new foods and learn about what kind of foods are indigenous not just to Montana, but in some cases all along the north American continent. This trend of indigenous foods was followed into the following school year as well, hosting a full indigenous foods night across all the different food courts on campus.<sup>20</sup> Last but certainly not least, are the numerous indigenous speakers who come to campus and talk about the work they are doing, and particular ways of Indigenous knowing, being, and doing. These speakers come from all across the country, some coming from the homelands around our college in Montana, some from other areas of the United States, and some from other countries with indigenous populations, such as when NAS and other campus programs co-hosted WINHEC's own Dr. Elisabeth Utsi Gaup's presentation as one of a series of events celebrating MSU's and Bozeman's adoption of Indigenous Peoples Day<sup>21</sup>. By inviting and co-hosting these speakers and events, we advocate for an array of opportunities for students and members of the greater Montana State and Bozeman community to learn about indigenous nations and cultures, and interact with Native people.

## Future Directions

Ultimately, we would like to partner with Native language experts at Tribal Colleges to be able to offer language courses for all of the tribes in our region as credit-bearing courses, so that students can continue their cultural/linguistic learning and connections with their Home communities, even while they're at their MSU 'home away from Home.' With our recent hire of Dr. Leo Killsback, we will have the potential to create new programming around language revitalization, particularly with regard to the Northern Cheyenne language, and we look

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<sup>19</sup> MSU's Fork in the Road food truck, [http://www.montana.edu/culinaryservices/fork\\_in\\_the\\_road/index.html](http://www.montana.edu/culinaryservices/fork_in_the_road/index.html).

<sup>20</sup> MSU Culinary Services to host Nov. 13 indigenous dinner in dining halls, <https://www.montana.edu/news/19256/msu-culinary-services-to-host-nov-13-indigenous-dinner-in-dining-halls>.

<sup>21</sup>MSU celebrates indigenous peoples with activities Oct. 8-25, <https://www.montana.edu/news/18054/msu-celebrates-indigenous-peoples-with-activities-oct-8-25>.

forward to learning from and supporting Dr. Killsback's ideas for bringing this area of our programming out of its infancy.

As is stated elsewhere in this document, the new American Indian Hall will be more than a building. The NAS Department and the University as a whole have embraced it as a living monument to Indigenous diversity and vitality, from the work of Native artists that will adorn its interior, to the very materials used to construct it, the Hall will in one way or another represent all of the region's Indigenous homelands:

*The people of Montana want to write a new chapter based on trust and understanding among groups with diverse interests and world views. We all must be a part of this important conversation. The American Indian Hall at MSU will help advance that aspiration and allow our native sons and daughters to spread their knowledge within and beyond the reservation borders, into the world in which we now live. Our hope is that we can create a better future for everyone from this place, this educational home for our future American Indian leaders and all MSU students.*  
-Cultural Outreach Report, p. 5 (see Appendix F)

Furthermore, the new Hall will be home to a nexus of collaborators from across the region and campus, as we move forward with efforts like Native Land Project partnerships, the **Indigenous Research Initiative**, and the Buffalo Nations Food System Initiative (see Section 1.5, above).

## 2.4 Indigenous Assessment and Achievement

(adapted from Matt Herman)

Educational programming assessment at MSU takes place at multiple levels within the institution. The primary assessment activities relative to institutional accreditation are carried out at the institutional level. Data on the institutional assessment of educational programming can be found by contacting the Provost's Office (see also Appendix G).<sup>22</sup>

Secondary assessment activities relative to teaching and learning effectiveness within academic units are carried out at the departmental level. The Native American Studies Department at Montana State University performs periodic internal and external assessments of its academic programs to ensure it is meeting the mandate of quality educational programming as stated in the Department's Mission Statement: "The Department for Native American Studies was established to provide and advance quality education for and about

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<sup>22</sup> Academic Assessment - Office of the Provost, at <https://www.montana.edu/provost/assessment/>.

American Indians of Montana, the region, and the nation. In fulfilling this mission, the Department is committed to meet the changing needs of Montana's Indian tribes and all Montana citizens through excellence in teaching, research, and service." The Department's assessment plans and results from the last several years can be found on the Department's website.<sup>23</sup>

In 2007, the Department made the conscious decision to conduct its required upcoming external review by pursuing WINHEC accreditation. Reasoning behind this decision was rooted in the Department's desire to bring all of its programs, including educational programs, into greater alignment with indigenous values, practices, and procedures. To prepare for the 2008 WINHEC site visit, the Department submitted documents that address teaching and learning effectiveness. In "MSU Departmental Assessment Update Spring 2007," the Department addressed educational programming assessment by recognizing "the need for currency in updating the Student Outcomes Assessment Guide and related documents and intend[ed] to do so following an intensive external review to be conducted by the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium. This review [was] scheduled for the Summer of 2008 and [included] a site visit during Fall Semester 2008. We anticipate[d] some input to our assessment procedures based on recommendation from the accreditation team."

The 2008 "Native American Studies Department WINHEC Self-Study" discusses educational programming assessment in several sections. In the "Cultural Standards" section, the Department describes six principles that guide its faculty in scholarship, teaching, and mentoring of graduate students: intellectual freedom and academic excellence, support of tribal sovereignty and self-determination, outreach and assistance to Montana's tribal communities, collaboration and involvement in broader NAS and Indigenous Studies academic communities, respect for tribal histories and cultures, and respectful individualism (8-9). In section 4.6, "Teaching Methods," the Department describes how it works "to facilitate the needs of American Indian students with respect to their cultural backgrounds," "to introduce indigenous philosophies in the classrooms," "to introduce American Indian pedagogical methods into the classroom," and "to maintain an atmosphere of tolerance and non-judgment to allow for maximum participation by students" (17-18). In section 6.1, "Non-Teaching Minor in Native American Studies," the Department lists the following competencies as learner outcomes:

- ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing

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<sup>23</sup> NAS Assessments - Native American Studies, at <http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/Assessments.html>

- ability to read critically and analyze literature in Native American Studies
- ability to carry out independent research in Native American Studies
- knowledge of the broad field relating to the history, cultures, literature, ecological views, language, spiritual beliefs, philosophy and contemporary issues of the native people of the Americas
- demonstrate a comprehension of cultural diversity in this country from the perspective of indigenous peoples

In section 6.2, “Master of Arts in Native American Studies,” the Department lists the following competencies as learner outcomes:

- ability to express oneself clearly and effectively orally and in writing
- ability to critically read primary texts in the discipline
- demonstrate critical thinking skills
- understand theories and concepts in Native American Studies
- demonstrate competence in basic field research methods

In response to the 2008 Self-Study and the 2008 Site Visit that followed it, the WINHEC Review Team prepared a report that comments on teaching and learning effectiveness within the Department. In the section “Application/Self-Study Native American Studies Department” in the 2008 “Draft Report of the Review Team to the Native American Studies Department,” the WINHEC Review Team notes approvingly the Department’s adoption of its “universal core values” and its “international core principles” (9-10). In the section “Collective Responsibility: Review Team On-site Visitation” in the 2008 “Draft Report of the Review Team to the Native American Studies Department,” the WINHEC Review Team notes approvingly MSU’s accreditation by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities because it stands as evidence “the NAS Department meets all of the academic rigor, quality, research, and student/teacher learning community criteria” (11). The main question the Review Team was left with from the Site Visit was, “How does a mainstream Native American course program, department, or college or university demonstrate it is indigenous” (12)?

Since the 2008 WINHEC Site Visit, the NAS Department has addressed how to demonstrate Indigeneity through teaching and learning effectiveness in many ways as reflected in the documents the Department has submitted in advance of the upcoming spring 2020 WINHEC Site Visit. In the 2018 “WINHEC Review Response” document, the Department describes efforts over the past several years to indigenize programs, policies, and procedures within the Department and across the greater MSU campus community. In the section “Indigenizing

MSU: 2008-2018,” the Department discusses three ways “our teaching has been indigenized [through]:

- the material we teach
- the way that learning is facilitated
- the medium of instruction used

Examples of the material we teach include NASX 415: Native Food Systems, which “relies on Indigenous knowledge as the source for all instruction,” and NASX 440: Montana Native Literatures, which is a relatively new course for the Department that “adds a local focus and relevance” by being based on the storytelling traditions of Montana tribes (16). An example of the indigenized facilitation of learning includes the development of NASX 570: Indigenous Planning, which gives students “the hard skills” to focus on and confront “Indigenous realities related to land tenure, food sovereignty, and economic development.” And an example of the indigenized medium of instruction is the creation of the Department’s online graduate certificate program, which enables students, especially those in rural reservation communities, to complete graduate coursework from home.

The 2018 “WINHEC Review Response” document also includes an addendum that contains the most recent assessment plans for the Department’s undergraduate non-teaching minor, the Graduate Certificate program, and the Master’s of Art program. Juxtaposing the learner outcomes from today’s academic programs to those from 2008 (see above) provides an instructive contrast showing the degree of indigenization that has taken place in teaching and learning effectiveness within the Department. Learner outcomes for the non-teaching minor are as follows. Students will:

- explain the concept of tribal sovereignty and how tribal sovereignty is both restricted and acknowledged by the federal trust relationship and by relationships with the states
- understand the development of modern tribal governments and their functions and importance in contemporary society
- understand and appreciate the roles of history, culture, and politics in the development of tribal worldviews that relate to modern life and contemporary issues of concern for Native American peoples
- identify historical, cultural, and political diversity and significance in Native oral traditions and written literatures
- recognize stereotypes about Native American peoples and explain why these stereotypes were created and why they are sustained in modern society

- understand historical experiences and contemporary issues in North America from the perspective of American Indian peoples

Learner outcomes for the Graduate Certificate program are as follows. Students will:

- make apparent in master's-level research the interdisciplinary connections between American Indian studies and the primary field of graduate study
- integrate American Indian studies research methods with the research methods used in the primary field of graduate study
- demonstrate in writing the ability to understand a variety of subjects from a tribal perspective

Learner outcomes from the Master of Arts in Native American Studies are as follows:

- ability to orally express oneself clearly and effectively
- ability to express oneself clearly and effectively in writing
- ability to critically read primary texts in the discipline
- understand theories and concepts in Native American Studies
- demonstrate competence in basic field research methods
- demonstrate ability to conduct scholarly or professional activities in an ethical manner

To date, assessment of the Department's academic programs based on these updated learner outcomes is incomplete. As can be seen in the supporting documents posted online, while assessment rubrics exist for all the Department's academic programs, only the Master's program was assessed during the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2016-2017 academic years<sup>24</sup>. Assessments of the non-teaching minor and the Graduate Certificate program remain to be completed.

## Future Directions

The presentation of teaching and learning effectiveness data in the preceding pages gives an indication of where the Department has been and how far the Department has come in the years since the previous WINHEC Site Visit. The Department's assessments of its academic programming have served to maintain the Department's good standing as an academic unit at MSU. The changes made over the last few years to the learner outcomes of the Department's

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<sup>24</sup> See NAS Assessments at <http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/Assessments.html>, also attached in Appendix G.

academic programs indicate alignments with indigenous values, knowledges, protocols, and objectives. The development of new courses and alterations to existing ones that add indigenous content and address issues of facilitation and delivery in indigenously favorable ways are two more positive changes. These developments are a foundation on which to build. Attention now needs to be directed to two main concerns.

First, the Department needs to solve the problem of not completing assessment cycles for all of its academic programs in a timely fashion and in a way that leads to the productive use of results for continuous program improvement. The main obstacle, now as it has been over the last several years, is a lack of personnel. The two full-time tenured faculty members end up being on every department committee, stretching them too thin and leaving gaps, like academic programming assessments. Currently, the Department has no Assessment Committee. Assessment is carried out in ad hoc fashion, creating a situation in which the Department can meet institutional requirements but falls short on time for substantive changes.

Second, the Department needs to enact substantive changes to its academic program assessment activities to bring them into alignment with the terms of the “Imagining Indigenization and Reversal of Assimilation” priorities spelled out in the Department’s 2019 WINHEC Eligibility Application. This blueprint calls for a three-part approach that includes “**Indigenous Student Well-Being Standards**,” “**Indigenous Research Standards**,” and “**Indian Education for All in Higher Education**.” How does the Department incorporate these into the assessment of educational programming? Would doing so involve the conversion of these principles into measurable learner outcomes? Or would additional measures need to be taken, even developed, to help the Department improve teaching and learning effectiveness “as the foundation to meaningful indigenous assessments to inform appropriate instruction for diverse learners”? (For more information on exact assessment see Appendix G).

## *2.5 Community & Institutional Support & Integration*

In the work that helped to form our Eligibility Application, we spent a lot of time discussing who our community is, and how we integrate their concerns into what we do as a department and student center. Our community is composed of multiple elements, making the answer itself not fully straight forward. In part, ours is an intertribal student community, representing multiple different tribes from across different states, each with their own cultural background and upbringing. It is also composed of the different tribal entities that exist across the state of Montana. We strive to work with each separate tribal entity on issues that are relevant to their

community, and in doing so help to create paths to and from the university setting so that students see a clear purpose for being here. Our community is also made up of our non-Native students, instructors, graduate students, allies and aspiring allies who all want to be involved in various ways. By helping them learn respectful methods of allyship, and arming them with the historical and contemporary knowledge they need to understand indigenous issues around the world, they can then turn around and aid in the process of allyship for others in the future. The most visible way in which we support this work of building respect and breaking down stereotypes is through the MSU Council of Elders, who are appointed by the MSU President as an advisory group. The Council membership represents every Indigenous Nation in Montana, and provides a critical voice for Native concerns.

The American Indian Student Support center works to integrate our student community, as well as the indigenous community of the town where our university is located, into the inner workings of what they do. The student run American Indian Council (AIC) has general meetings, where members of the Native community of Bozeman are invited, to vote on issues that the student committee is involved in. These topics range from what the community wants to see that semester, how to properly budget the annual powwow, and numerous other topics. Additionally, NAS Masters candidate Patrick Jeffers is focusing his research on the cultural **well-being** of Native students on campus. He focuses on the importance of holding or growing a traditional cultural identity that can be utilized as an anchor to help indigenous students stay at the institution. By practicing **Indigenous research** methodologies while working with members of the Native student population, his research underscores the importance of traditional identity, while also discussing ways that the student center can be improved or utilized in a better way for some members of the student population. By involving other students, this research empowers students, staff and faculty to recognize where change is needed, and to adapt accordingly.

## Financial Aid, Scholarships and Other Student Resources

By way of describing our context within the larger institution, MSU participates in the Sloan Indigenous Graduate Partnership (SIGP) program with the University of Arizona, Purdue, University of Alaska, University of Montana, Montana Tech, and SUNY ECFS, which helps American Indian and Alaska Native students succeed in graduate study in the STEM fields. The American Indian Research Opportunities (AIRO) is a unique consortium of seven Tribal Colleges in Montana developed to increase the number of Native Americans in STEM fields. AIRO's mission is to recruit, retain, and graduate American Indian and other students with associate,

baccalaureate, masters and doctoral degrees in STEM fields (See Appendix B) These are just a few of the many resources available specifically to Native students at MSU.<sup>25</sup>

## Future Directions

NAS faculty and staff are working with Indigenous Nations around the state to institutionalize operational support for an **Indigenous Research Initiative** at MSU by developing: an Indigenous Research Council--a voting body--comprised of representatives from each Native Nation in Montana; an Indigenous Research Network and online clearinghouse to communicate each participating Tribal Nation's research priorities and support the goal of Indigenous led research; and an annual Indigenous Research Summit to be planned in partnership with the American Indian/Alaska Native Clinical Translational Research Program, an NIH-funded organization at MSU. Recognizing that Indigenous and Western Ways of Knowing are different but share common ground (Barnhart & Kawagley, 2005), the Indigenous Research Initiative (IRI) seeks to provide opportunities for emerging and established Indigenous scholars in Montana communities (both urban and within tribal lands), tribal colleges, and within institutions of higher education around the state. The IRI's mission is to inform by practicing collaborative forms of research that are equitable, mutually beneficial, and driven by Indigenous research priorities. In doing so, the IRI will support lasting relationships, co-create knowledge, practice reciprocity, and institutionalize respect for Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing at Montana State University, Montana's Tribal Colleges, and other institutions of higher education in the Montana University System. In addition, the IRI will support participating Indigenous entities in developing and communicating their research priorities so that outsider-defined research--which tends to focus on symptoms of cultural disruption, such as disease management, from solely western methodology, rather than on components of resilience and health--becomes a thing of the past. Approaches like Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRM) have emerged in an effort to privilege local and Indigenous knowledges. But the interrelated root causes of health disparities in Native communities--primarily, substandard or unavailable health care, uneven economic development, land tenure issues, and environmental injustice--remain under-researched and their potential solutions under-funded. Few and far between are local Indigenous researchers and perspectives that can drive how and what research is conducted. The IRI has begun its work with the Blackfeet Nation in Browning, Montana, where foundational relationships among project partners are already established, and a well functioning Institutional Review Board (IRB) is already in place. From there, IRI team members from Blackfeet and MSU are reaching out to other Indigenous communities and tribal officials

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<sup>25</sup> See MSU's Native Student Resource page, at <http://www.montana.edu/native/>.

around Montana, and convened a gathering of core members for an inaugural discussion of this work on February 12, 2020, following a full afternoon of workshops the previous day on *Inclusive Teaching, Mentoring & Research: Co-creating an Indigenous 'home Away from Home'* at MSU (see Sec. 1.5 above, and link in footnote, below).<sup>26</sup>

The long term goal is to establish an Indigenous Research Network that includes all eight Tribal Nations in Montana as well as, eventually, other urban Native communities around the state, and all institutions included in the Montana University System. Ultimately, this effort will also cross the imposed boundaries of state and nation-state, as we reach out in the spirit of collaboration and Indigenous-led partnership to the Eastern Shoshone and Arapaho of Wind River (Wyoming), the Northern Shoshone and Bannock (Idaho), and Indigenous nations north of the Medicine Line (Canada).

## ***2.6 Indigenous Intellectual & Cultural Property Rights***

At a minimum, the NAS Department is governed by the rules of MSU's Institutional Review Board (IRB)<sup>27</sup>, which is housed in the Office of Research Compliance, under the Office of Research, Economic Development and Graduate Education. MSU's IRB has stringent requirements for research involving human subjects (such as health related research projects), but less stringent requirements for projects considered "exempt" because of their minimally invasive status. However, these 'exempt' forms of research may include projects that, from Indigenous perspectives, would be considered harmful, such as those that violate cultural protocols, or exploit Indigenous knowledges. MSU's IRB process does provide for Tribal oversight, as follows:

*For research on Tribal Lands, the MSU IRB will review protocols concurrently with the Tribal IRB review, which is the standard procedure requested for research on Tribal Lands. In addition, MSU IRB will defer to the Tribal IRB for oversight of projects on Tribal Lands, and the Tribal IRB will serve as the single IRB of record in multi-site projects on Tribal Lands.*  
*MSU Office of Research Compliance, Authorization Agreement<sup>28</sup>*

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<sup>26</sup> Inclusive Teaching, Mentoring, and Research: Co-creating an Indigenous "home away from Home" at MSU, <http://www.montana.edu/diversity/resources/facultystaff/Inclusivenativeprogram.html>.

<sup>27</sup> See MSU Institutional Review Board webpage at, <http://www.montana.edu/orc/irb/index.html>.

<sup>28</sup> See Authorization Agreement at, [http://www.montana.edu/orc/irb/authorization\\_agreement.html](http://www.montana.edu/orc/irb/authorization_agreement.html).

Still, Tribes end up being saddled with the ever increasing pressure from outsiders to do various forms of research involving Indigenous peoples and places. Tribal IRB's--to the extent that they exist and are functioning--rely mainly on the volunteer efforts of the few individuals who are aware of the risks imposed by rogue research in Indigenous territories and, moreover, of the authority of Tribal governments to control that research and, ultimately, to develop their own research priorities based on the expressed needs of their communities.

Wherever tribal nations have their own IRB protocols, these discuss what they consider to be important and appropriate for research on their lands, and cover many indigenous values and concerns in doing so. For example, in the case of the IRB presented by Aaniiih Nakoda college, a requirement for the researchers in question to respect the culture, share the results with the tribe, and learn in detail why these restrictions must exist, cites historical precedents with invasive researchers who damaged the community.<sup>29</sup>

Of these tribal IRBs, some are based in the tribal colleges that exist on every reservation in Montana. Others are part of the tribe's governance structure. MSU's IRB office provides contact information for each tribe's IRB.<sup>30</sup> If there is interest in the tribal community, our students are supported in their efforts to contact and work with people in the communities who are appropriate to their research interests (e.g., Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, land planners, Tribal College educators, etc.), in developing their proposals.

In the Native American Studies Department, graduate students are taught to utilize **Indigenous Research** Methodologies as these have been developed by indigenous scholars like Shawn Wilson, Jo Ann Archibald and Maggie Kovach. The intent is to teach our students how to do research in a good way that respects the community that is undergoing the research, and to make sure that the topic of research is something that the community wants and not something that was thrust upon them. The department has some influence on other departments, by our graduate students' sharing the concepts behind **Indigenous Research** Methodologies with other disciplines, such as knowledge that is specific to place, and to the people/s that hold it.

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<sup>29</sup> Protection of Human Subjects In Research Principles, Policy, and Research Aaniiih Nakoda College. 2013. Institutional Review Board Guidebook, [http://www.ancollege.edu/online\\_resources/pdfs/IRB.pdf](http://www.ancollege.edu/online_resources/pdfs/IRB.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> Tribal College IRB's, MSU Office of Research Compliance, [http://www.montana.edu/orc/irb/tribal\\_college\\_irbs.html](http://www.montana.edu/orc/irb/tribal_college_irbs.html).

## Future Directions

Through the **Indigenous Research Initiative** described above, NAS faculty, staff and allies all across campus seek to establish greater protections on campus for Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, and greater support for tribes in their efforts to control and channel the types of research that get done on reservations and in Native communities.

Professional development workshops for staff and faculty are a means to educate and raise awareness around issues such as the ownership of data and research priorities in Native communities. Yet the university can do more to support Native communities and governments in their efforts to elicit research priorities from their communities, and establish protocols that encourage equitable forms of research that build local capacity while producing relevant knowledge.

### 2.7 Academic Faculty/Appointees

(adapted from Matt Herman)

*Please also see **Section 3.2**, below, for a description and graphic illustration of our department's non-hierarchical organization, which is unique in that it incorporates academics, student support and administration in a way that allows for flux, and egalitarian relationships among its members.*

The Native American Studies Department at Montana State University operates as a full-fledged academic department within the University's College of Letters and Science. The Department's governance structure is comprised of a Department Head, staff, and tenured/tenure-track faculty members. The Department Head, staff and faculty meet periodically to determine policies, engage in planning, develop curriculum, and review and assess performance. The Department also occasionally hosts international scholars doing research with Native American communities, such as Aboriginal writer Dr. Blaze Kwaymullina.<sup>31</sup>

Currently, NAS has a Department Head and two full-time, tenured faculty members. To operate governance at normal strength, the Department needs a Department Head and four full-time tenure-track faculty members. Under normal conditions with an appropriate number of faculty, the Department would operate various committees--assessment committee, workload committee, graduate admission committee, etc. Currently, these committees do not exist due

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<sup>31</sup> See, Aboriginal writer learns from laughing crows, hockey fights, and Indian stories, at <https://www.montana.edu/news/9060/aboriginal-writer-learns-from-laughing-crows-hockey-fights-and-indian-stories>.

to insufficient faculty personnel to support them. To perform normal governance within the Department, governance activities are conducted on an ad hoc basis, with the Department Head and the two full-time faculty members being responsible for all committee work, academic program decision-making, planning, and assessment.

The standard teaching load for full-time tenured/tenure-track faculty in NAS is five courses per year. Full-time faculty in the Department are also expected to mentor graduate students and serve on graduate student thesis and professional paper committees. To meet current program and curricular demands, the Department must hire adjunct faculty. Beginning fall semester 2020, two new full-time tenure-track faculty hires will be joining the Department.

Per University policy, the Department Head submits annual reviews of individual faculty performance to the Dean. These evaluations are conducted by the Department Head. The evaluations are determined by measuring the extent and the degree to which faculty activities over the course of the year meet the required percentages of effort among teaching, scholarship, and service requirements as elaborated in the Department's workload policy and in the individual faculty member's letter of hire. Once completed, these evaluations are shared with individual faculty members. Faculty can contest their performance review to the Dean as described in the Faculty Handbook.

The Department strives to employ and maintain a core of full-time tenure-track faculty that meets qualifications particular to the needs and demands of the Department. The primary qualification is having a terminal degree in NAS or an NAS-related field. Preferred qualifications include having an established record of scholarship, relevant effective teaching experience, and meaningful experiential relationships with Montana tribal communities. The following is a list of biographical sketches of current and newly hired faculty in the Department.

## ***Current Faculty Profiles***

### **Department Head**

**Dr. Walter C. Fleming (Kickapoo)**, the head of the NAS Department, is an expert on Northern Plains Indian culture, American Indian literature and history. Dr. Fleming is the author of numerous book chapters and articles on Native American history, myths and prejudices, and Native American cultural heritage, and is the co-editor of a book entitled, *Visions of an Enduring People*. His most recent book, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Native American History*, is acknowledged nationwide.



### **Katz Endowed Chair**

#### **Loren BirdRattler (Blackfeet)**

Loren BirdRattler currently holds the Katz Endowed Chair in Native American Studies at MSU, and he continues to work on the development of the Blackfeet Tribe's Agriculture Resource Management Plan (ARMP), a plan that will create policy in agriculture resource, land, conservation, holistic

management practice and water resource

management, as well as agriculture and livestock regulation for both the Blackfeet Tribe and the United States governments. Loren has more than fifteen years of public and private sector experience in organizational development, strategic planning, policy development, project management, and civic engagement. He is a former National Field Director for the Native Vote Initiative for the National Congress of American Indians, a Public Program Specialist for the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, both in Washington, DC. He was the inaugural Executive Director for two non-profits, Western Native Voice and Montana Native Vote both based in Billings, MT. He was also a program manager for the United States Department of Defense's Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program based in Arlington, VA for Keres Consulting. Loren grew up on his family's ranch forty miles south of Browning on the Blackfeet Reservation.

### **Professors**

**Dr. Matt Herman** is an associate professor of Native American Studies. He has been with the Department since 2007. Dr. Herman is a settler scholar who holds a PhD in English (2005) and graduate certificate in cultural studies from Stony Brook University. Dr. Herman regularly teaches NASX 232: Montana Tribal Histories, Cultures, and Current Issues; NASX 340: Native American Literatures; and NASX 360: Native American Film. He has also developed three new courses while at MSU: NASX 265: World Indigenous Humanities, NASX 440: Montana Native Literatures, and NASX 505: Proseminar. Dr. Herman serves the Department at the university level by maintaining memberships on the Institutional Review Board and Faculty Senate. Dr. Herman publishes in the areas of



contemporary Native American literature and film, Indigenous humanities, **Indigenous research**, American cultural studies, composition pedagogy, and Indigenous political theory. He is the author of *Politics and Aesthetics in Contemporary Native American Literature: Across Every Border* (2010). His most recent work appears in *Modern Fiction Studies* and *Studies in American Indian Literatures*. Before coming to MSU, Dr. Herman worked for ten years in the Liberal Arts Program at Stone Child College on the Rocky Boy's Reservation in north central Montana.



**Kristin Ruppel** is an associate professor of Native American Studies. Her training in anthropology, botany, and conservation biology led circuitously to a focus on the United States' "civilization" policies and their ongoing consequences for American Indian allotted landowners. Her first book, *Unearthing Indian Land: Living with the Legacies of Allotment*, was published in 2008 by The University of Arizona Press. She has taught graduate and

undergraduate courses in (among others) Native Food Systems, Indigenous People/s and Film, Federal Indian Policy and Law, and Critical Theory and Research Methodologies--now consolidated into one required graduate 6-credit course called Research Praxis in Native American Studies. She is co-founder and director of the Native Land Project, works closely with the Katz Endowed Chair in Native American Studies in developing the **Indigenous Research Initiative**, and with the interdisciplinary Buffalo Nations Foods Initiative. She is co-PI with Blackfeet researchers Loren BirdRattler and Kim Paul on a 5-year collaborative project called "Blackfeet Innovation Pathways to Food Sovereignty: Sustainability through Indigenous Applied Research Partnerships," funded in 2019 by the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research.<sup>32</sup>

## New Hires (active fall 2020)

**Dr. Cheryl Redhorse Bennett (Navajo, Comanche)** comes to MSU from Arizona State University where she is an Assistant Professor in American Indian Studies. Bennett is an enrolled



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<sup>32</sup> See MSU news - Blackfeet Nation shares in grant, at <https://www.indianz.com/News/2019/07/23/msu-news-blackfeet-nation-shares-in-gran.asp>.

citizen of the Navajo Nation and a descendant of the Comanche Nation. She grew up in the Four Corners region of New Mexico. Dr. Bennett holds a PhD in American Indian Studies from the University of Arizona, a Master of Arts in American Indian Studies from the University of California Los Angeles, and a Bachelor of Arts in English and Southwest Studies from Fort Lewis College. Dr. Bennett publishes on the topics of violence in reservation border towns, violence against Native women, and crime and Indian gaming. Dr. Bennett's research interests include American Indian social issues, race relations, crime and hate crimes against American Indians, and missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW). Decolonizing methodologies are central to Dr. Bennett's research and scholarship.



**Dr. Leo KILLSBACK (Tsistsistas)** comes to MSU from Arizona State University where he is an Associate Professor in American Indian Studies. Dr. KILLSBACK grew up on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in southeastern Montana, and he culturally and spiritually identifies himself as a Cheyenne person. Dr. KILLSBACK has a PhD in American Indian Studies from the University of Arizona with emphases on tribal government, tribal law, federal Indian law, and American Indian culture and spirituality. His dissertation, "The Chiefs' Prophecy: the Destruction of Original Cheyenne Leadership During the Critical Era, 1876-1935," is an epic of the history of Northern Cheyenne leaders, governance, and leadership systems. Dr. KILLSBACK uses Cheyenne philosophies, oral traditions, and decolonizing theories in his research and scholarship.

## Emeritus Faculty

We treasure our elders and we continue to value and honor their advice and insights. Thus, we include those faculty and staff who have retired or have moved on in their careers as part of our academic family. We respect the contributions they have made to the creation of our departmental and university ethos. They are always invited to share their perspectives as honored members of our ever expanding family.

**Dr. Henrietta Mann, PhD (Tsistsistas)** is a Cheyenne enrolled with the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes and she is the founding President of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal College. Dr. Mann was the first individual to occupy the Endowed Chair in Native American Studies at Montana State University, where she is Professor Emeritus and continues to serve as Special

Assistant to the President. For the greater part of twenty-eight years, she was employed at the University of Montana, Missoula where she was Director/Professor of Native American Studies. She also has taught at the University of California, Berkeley; Graduate School of Education at Harvard University; and Haskell Indian Nations University located in Lawrence, Kansas. In addition, Dr. Mann has served as the Director of the Office of Indian Education Programs/ Deputy to the Assistant Secretary for [the Bureau of] Indian Affairs. She also was the National Coordinator of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act Coalition for the Association on American Indian Affairs.

**Dr. Wayne J. Stein (Turtle Mountain Chippewa)** is a Professor Emeritus of Native American Studies & Higher Education Studies at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana. He works closely with the seven tribal colleges (TCU) of Montana and several others around the country. He has also consulted with several tribes interested in starting their own TCU. His scholarship has focused primarily on TCU's, but he has done some research and writing in the areas of Indian gaming and faculty of color in higher education. He is the author or co-author of three books, including *The Renaissance of American Indian Higher Education: Capturing the Dream* (2002). He formerly served as President of Sitting Bull College and Vice-President of Academic Affairs at Ft. Berthold Community College. Dr. Stein's tribal affiliation is Turtle Mountain Chippewa.



**Bill Yellowtail (Apsaalooke/Crow)** grew up on his family's cattle ranch on the Crow Indian Reservation in Montana. Holding a degree in geography from Dartmouth College, Bill has been a rancher, educator, fishing guide, Montana State Senator and congressional candidate. An expert canoeist and fly fisherman, he was named Angler of the Year for 1991 by Fly Rod and Reel magazine. He served as Regional Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency during the Clinton administration, with responsibility for six western states and 27 Indian Tribes. Bill received the Dartmouth Environmental Network's 1994 annual award in recognition of

his outstanding contributions to protection of the environment, and he received the Mary G. Ross Award for exemplary service from the Council of Energy Resource Tribes in 1999. He

served on the Boards of Directors of Humanities Montana, the Burton K. Wheeler Center and the National Audubon Society. Bill currently serves as an advisor in our effort to establish the **Indigenous Research Initiative** at MSU.

**Dr. Joseph P. Gone, Aaniiih-Gros Ventre nation of Montana**, is Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (Anthropology) and the Faculty of Medicine (Global Health and Social Medicine) at Harvard University and the former holder of the Kaz Family Chair in Native American Studies, Montana State University. As an interdisciplinary social scientist with both theoretical and applied interests, Professor Gone has collaborated for 25 years with American Indian and other Indigenous communities to rethink community-based mental health services and to harness traditional culture and spirituality for advancing indigenous **well-being**. He does so from the perspective of a scholar who is trained in health service psychology, inspired by anthropology-style interpretive analysis, and committed to participatory research strategies. Examples of Professor Gone's projects include comparisons of Indigenous cultural psychologies with the logics of the mental health professions, critical analysis of the concept of Indigenous historical trauma, collaborative development of the Blackfeet Culture Camp for community-based treatment of addiction, and commissioned formulation of the Urban American Indian Traditional Spirituality Program for orienting urban Indigenous peoples to traditional spiritual practices.



## Future Directions

The Department is fortunate to have an excellent pool of ready and available adjunct faculty to draw upon in times of need. We are looking forward to welcoming its two new faculty hires when they join the Department in fall 2020. These hires bring needed expertise to the Department in the areas of Indian law, tribal governance, gender issues, and criminal justice, which will help the Department fill its curricular demands. These two hires, Dr. Killsback in particular, will increase the Department's profile with respect to tribal community representation in Montana. We are also looking for areas to advocate for more Native hires in other departments and programs on campus.

Going forward, the Department recognizes that much needs to be done to improve the relationship between the Department's curriculum, research and scholarship profile, and Montana tribal communities. A longstanding challenge to making these improvements has been MSU's lack of proximity to Montana's tribal communities and the related challenges that are involved with closing those distances. We are confident that these new hires will augment existing energies in creating opportunities for increased engagement between teaching and scholarship in the Department and the many communities it serves.

## 2.8 Academic Freedom

(adapted from Christen Falcon)<sup>33</sup>

MSU's policy on academic freedom, as endorsed by Montana's Board of Regents, emphasizes "the responsibilities as well as the privileges which members of the profession and professional organizations associate with this important concept of American life."<sup>34</sup> The policy statement is based on that originally developed in 1940 by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) as a *cautious* statement of principles on academic freedom and tenure: essentially, that faculty members are entitled to freedom in relation to their subject, but that they should be careful when introducing "controversial matter which has no relation to their subject" (b); and, outside of the classroom they should be "free from institutional censorship or discipline [... but that] they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution" (c).

### Future Directions

The University's policy on academic freedom says nothing about the cultural and intellectual property rights of Indigenous peoples, whether inside or outside of the classroom setting. ***This silence represents a prime opportunity for the NAS Department and allies to advocate for a revised or wholly new statement recognizing international conventions such as the Mataatua Declaration on Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We are excited to begin this work, and grateful to this accreditation process, through which this issue was brought to our attention. This work is advancing under the standards developed in our Eligibility***

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<sup>33</sup> Christen is a Return to Learn Outreach Specialist. See Stories/testimonials - Allen Yarnell Center for Student Success, at <http://www.montana.edu/aycss/return2learn/newsandcollaborations.html>.

<sup>34</sup> See Academic Freedom - MSU Policies and Procedures, at [https://www.montana.edu/policy/faculty\\_handbook/academic\\_freedom.html](https://www.montana.edu/policy/faculty_handbook/academic_freedom.html).



“ I believe we first need to begin addressing [the question of academic freedom] with a seat at the table. Often, Native American studies education is determined by a group of non-natives who think we should learn NAS from a linear western point of view. By reclaiming a seat at the table, we are taking ourselves off the menu and establishing our own ideas as indigenous students of this university. Montana State University recognizes that, in order to support academic freedom, it must uphold freedom in teaching and in the fundamental search for the advancement of knowledge ...

”

- Christen Falcon (Blackfeet)  
MSU Undergraduate Business Management  
NAS Minor, and Return to Learn Outreach  
Specialist

**Application process--Indigenous Student Well-being, Indigenous Research, and Indian Education for All.** The work is a broadly-defined effort to apply these standards and create an Indigenized space in all aspects of the University's collaboration and shared work with Native and non-native students and researchers, and Native nations.

Bridging the gap between the University, its Indigenous students, and their Home communities has been the Department of Native American Studies' transparent goal for decades. The Department strives, through scholarship, teaching and service, to stay relevant to the Indigenous communities and people/s it serves. It can only do so if the university community (from the top down and the bottom up) recognizes the limits, as well as the freedoms and responsibilities of academics, particularly as regards intellectual and cultural property rights, and the data sovereignty of Indigenous nations. These are areas of critical importance in the ongoing work of the **Indigenous Research Initiative (IRI)** as we seek to advocate and educate around the standards that tribes, themselves, have, and are, setting (see Sec. 1.6, above). The IRI places Native nations and their institutional review boards in the driver's seat with regards to all research conducted by MSU researchers with Native

nations. **Indigenous research** priorities will be put in the lead. The protection of data gathered in research activities as well as cultural knowledge is the established right of the Native nations involved. The IRI will provide Indigenous oversight of research relationships to ensure those rights are fulfilled. Further, the IRI concerns itself with ensuring native students at MSU and tribal colleges are included in MSU research efforts in those students home communities. By

including student researchers in these projects, we are together building human capacity in various fields of study amongst Native nations members.

On the University campus, NAS and the IRI is working closely with the Vice President of Diversity & Inclusion, the Council on American Indian Programs, and many other campus allies to advance faculty and staff understanding of the differences between the dominant worldview and epistemology and that of Native worldviews and epistemologies. One example is an upcoming sold-out presentation to faculty and staff which will feature research partners (Native students and their non-native mentors/advisers) in a panel discussion of successes in Indigenizing research methods, timelines, relationships, and academic protocols. We are constantly seeking ways to allow our students to come to their work in the fullness of who they are and to enrich the campus community by bringing their own ways of being, doing, and knowing to the conversation and shared creative work.



## General Operations

### 3.1 Facilities

*(adapted from Rachel Tang)*

#### **Acknowledgment of Traditional Custodians:**

We acknowledge and honor, with respect, the Indigenous custodians on whose traditional territories Montana State University now stands and whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. We ask the spiritual ancestors to forgive our intrusion and humbly ask for their guidance.

#### **A Cultural Crossroads**

MSU is located in a major traditional crossroads for Plains and Plateau Native nations, a meeting place where these nations historically congregated to trade, celebrate and negotiate. In the historical archives, this area is identified as a “Common Hunting Ground” by non-Native officials (Figure 3, southwestern corner of map; area in beige). But these officials “did not actually ‘create’ the common hunting ground. They simply acknowledged and restructured the reality of a preexisting Indian

#### ***“home away from Home”***

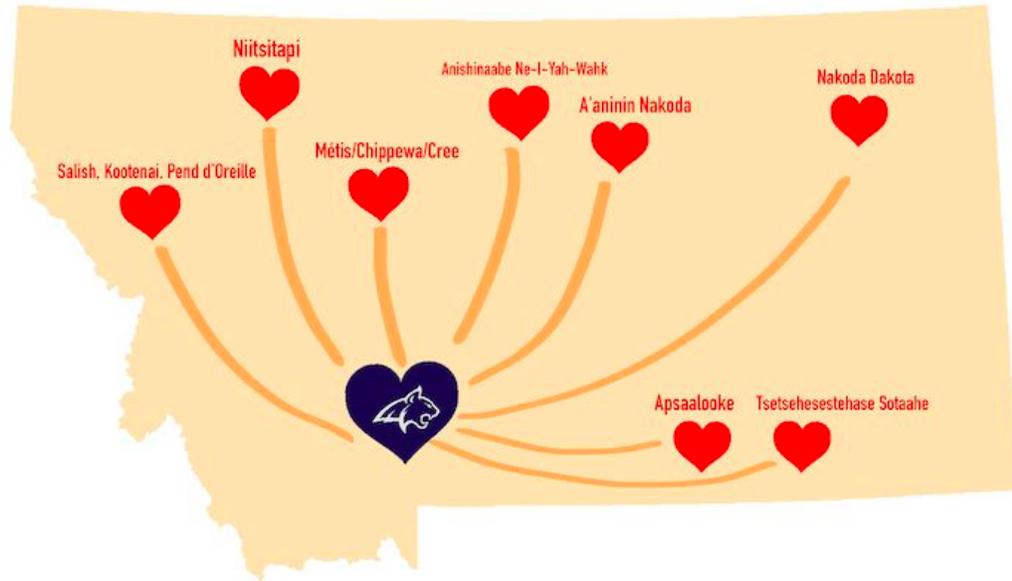
Through our resources and academic support services for Native students, we seek to empower students to make the most of their education at MSU. The NAS Department is committed to supporting opportunities for community building, collaborative scholarship and providing a “home away from Home” for Native students and their allies.

common hunting ground, a sort of buffalo commons, that gradually over the years had been constructed through war, treaties, and diplomacy on the part of the tribes themselves” (Farr 2001, 132-3).



Figure 3: Map of Tribal Territories in Montana, Office of Public Instruction<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> See Map of Tribal Territories in Montana, at <http://opi.mt.gov/Educators/Teaching-Learning/Indian-Education-for-All/Indian-Education-Curriculum-Development-Implementation>,



By respecting and making space for the various forms of spirituality practiced by our students, faculty and staff, we seek to create and maintain an atmosphere where everyone feels safe, and recognizes--via any and all of the senses--elements of *Home* in their surroundings at MSU. Students may hear and participate in drum groups, smudging and prayer, dance, and any number of other markers of Indigenous identity and presence.

### **American Indian/Alaska Native Student Success Services**

What began as the Intercultural Communications Center, which housed with American Indian students, international students, Peace Corps and student Vista student advising services, evolved into the Center for Intercultural Programs, ultimately morphed into the present American Indian/ Alaska Native Student Success Services. Our work and integrity strives to reflect and build upon our founding adviser / director, Dr. Dan Voyich's approach of kindness to students, a generosity of spirit that goes above and beyond the call of duty.

In the photo archives of the Department lives a slide, taken during an MSU registration session in the late 1960s. The picture is of the Center for Intercultural Programs. In the photo, Dan Voyich sits behind a table, visiting with a Native student. Below, on the table skirt is a home-made sign that reads, "Indian Student Advisor." Above Dan's head is another sign, this one reading, "All Foreign Students Stop Here." This was how it was: Native students treated as "foreign" students. We never wish to see those days again.

Yet, we still have a ways to go, as we work to create a space where Indigenous students truly feel at home here. We have some clear directives from our students on specific ways we can do that. For instance, as one undergraduate student explained in response to the question of how we can better serve Native students and their communities, the department needs to “step up and educate people” on things like burning sweetgrass in the dorms.<sup>36</sup> Native students often end up rooming with non-natives, and always have to deal with non-native RA’s (residence advisors), who may call the police thinking that students are smoking marijuana rather than praying. Native students end up having to educate their peers and advisors on these essential cultural and spiritual practices, rather than being able to pray in peace. NAS is pressing for the University to do more to ensure Indigenous student **well-being** through efforts such as the one that mandates Indian Education for All training for every employee (though nothing is currently mandated for students; see Section 1.6).

The AI/AN SSS remains committed to its mission to recruit, retain (nurture physically, spiritually, mentally, emotionally), and help graduate our dynamic, richly diverse, and vital American Indian student body. Students are provided a center to adjust, transition, and flourish as they journey in their education at MSU. As the AI/AN SSS moves into a new home (see below), the Student Commons space will house our center and staff office space. Engaging, culturally competent programming, outreach, and advocacy in the continued spirit of going above and beyond and kindness to students will help ensure that our American Indian students feel like they are coming home.

## Future Directions

The most consequential impending change for the Department of Native American Studies and its AI/AN Student Support Services is the construction of the new “American Indian Hall” (a placeholder name) on MSU’s campus. As reflected in the very design of the building:

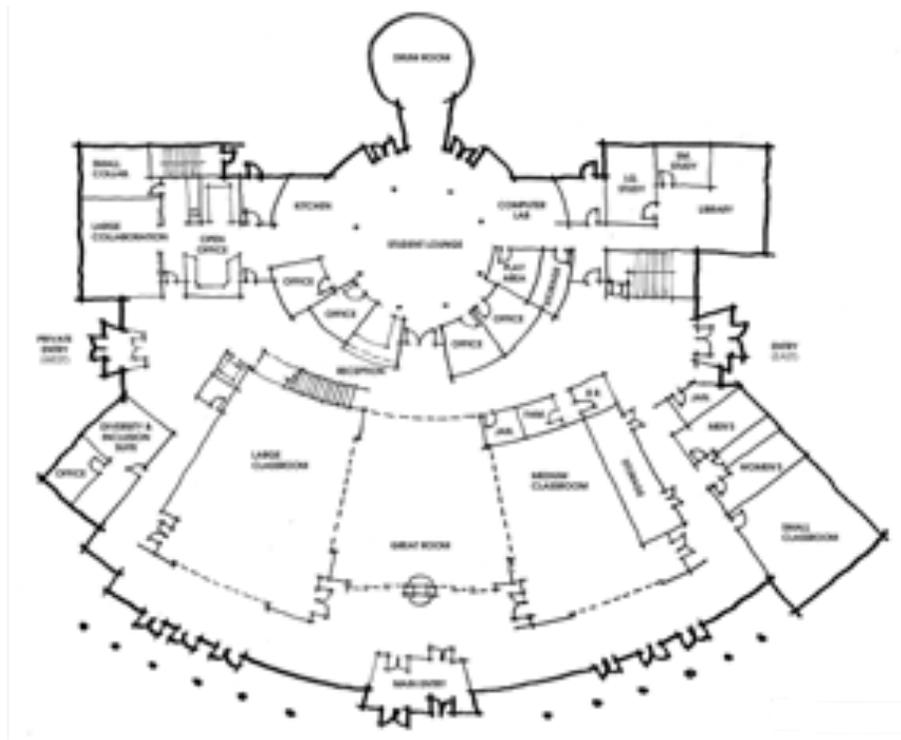
*The American Indian Hall will be a campus home for our native students, a place to share meals, meet with each other and with students from other backgrounds. A gathering room will create space where people come together to share the collective wisdom of their history, a place to speak openly and honestly, a place to practice native customs and culture. Additional rooms will house tutoring,*

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<sup>36</sup> NAS WINHEC Eligibility Application Survey, April 2019. Results recorded/coded in Google doc: Themes Other Interviews Exercise WINHEC Survey Questions (on file with authors).

*counseling and mentoring, a kitchen, a drum room, space for Elders to provide counsel, and of course, rooms for students to visit, study or work on projects.*

AIH Cultural Outreach Report, p. 4  
(see Appendix F)



MSU American Indian Hall, First Level Floor Plan  
Figure 4: AIH Cultural Outreach Report, p. 5 (see Appendix F)

In other words, NAS's core values are guiding the design of the building itself: its layout, structure, materials, and landscaping. From the Drum Room at its 'head' and spaces for smudging and prayer, to the kitchen and Student Commons area to the flexible classroom spaces, offices for NAS faculty, staff, and MSU's Office of Diversity & Inclusion, the building's inner spaces promise a home away from Home for students, staff and faculty alike. **The values of Spirituality, Kindness & Inclusivity, Generosity, Family, and Respect drove the design of a space that will accommodate the Hard Work, Honesty and sense of Humor it takes to achieve anything outside of one's comfort zone.**

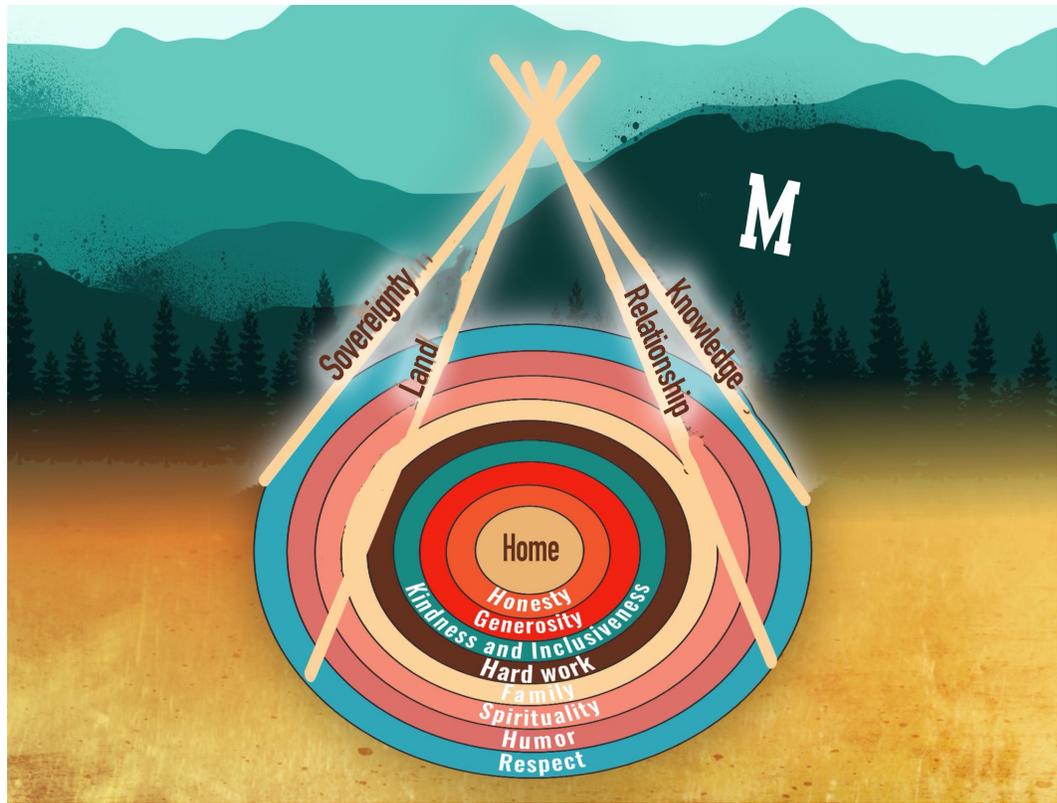


Figure 5: NAS Core Values, Eligibility Application, p. 5

*Building upon original concepts developed by Dennis Sun Rhodes of the Northern Arapaho and MSU Alumnus from the School of Architecture, the design of the building and accompanying grounds will be guided by a number of important constituents: [MSU] President Cruzado’s Council of Elders; the Native American Studies department at MSU; the American Indian Council (a student organization); our partners at the seven Tribal Colleges in Montana; the Associated Students of MSU; tribal elders from around the region; and interested community members.*

AIH Cultural Outreach Report, p. 5  
(see Appendix F)

Even the site where the new building will stand is becoming a space of rejuvenation and renewal through the passionate guidance of a team of cultural experts and spiritual leaders from Indigenous Nations around the region (see Appendix F: AIH Cultural Outreach Report, pp. 12-13). This group collectively identified the following “Action Items” as priorities as we move toward construction of the new building, and its long term presence and potential to influence the rest of campus (see Fig. 6, below).

## ACTION ITEMS

The following actions were highlighted by the group as “low hanging fruit” or easiest to implement the soonest.

### INTERACTIONS

- Increase Tribal community Interactions
- Build relationships and trust (5 votes)

### INDIGENIZE CAMPUS

- “Indigenize” MSU through planting/mapping
- Increase elder visits (5 votes)



### RESEARCH BENEFITS

- Research the benefits of indigenous diet (7 votes)

### BULK RECIPES

- Make bulk versions of indigenous food recipes
- Implement in University Cafeterias (5 votes)

### CONNECTIONS

- Connect Culinary Program and Native American Studies
- Build knowledge of indigenous foods while promoting health and culture (4 votes)

Figure 6: AIH Cultural Outreach Report, p. 23 (see Appendix F)

In response to the Native communities’ sustained interest in “indigenizing” MSU’s campus as a whole, an interdisciplinary team of MSU faculty, staff, students and administrators has developed a proposal for an Indigenous Foods Initiative, the Vision for which contemplates:

*[...] a Buffalo Nations Food System (BNFS) Initiative that will provide coursework and degree programs informed by Native knowledge keepers, a hub for connecting the work that is being done across campus and across Montana in support of Buffalo Culture food sovereignty, and infrastructure for collaborating with Native partners on regenerative outreach and scholarship. As the American Indian Hall construction is completed in Fall 2021, we envision an adjacent outdoor laboratory for exploring Indigenous plants (edible, medicinal, and ceremonial) that will be maintained and integrated into teaching, research, and outreach. The BNFS Initiative will help create, educate, and train tribal community food businesses, strengthen communities through Indigenous Food knowledge and access, and create opportunities for more Indigenous food producers. (Buffalo Nations Food System Initiative Proposal, January 2020)*

### 3.2 Administrative & Support Staff Service

As is reflected in the 'flowchart' below, NAS Departmental employees do not function from within a standard Western hierarchical model with linear and unchanging roles. Rather, we function more like a constellation of interacting and sometimes overlapping relationships. Stability in this model flows from the fact that we do not generally divide ourselves as "faculty" or "staff" or "administration." Although we fulfill roles that are more one than another, still, some of our staff and administration also teach, and some of our faculty are also administrators who perform duties more closely associated with student support than with teaching. So, in this section, we reflect back upon the descriptions of faculty in Section 2.7, above, as well as describing our Student Success Services personnel and departmental office staff.

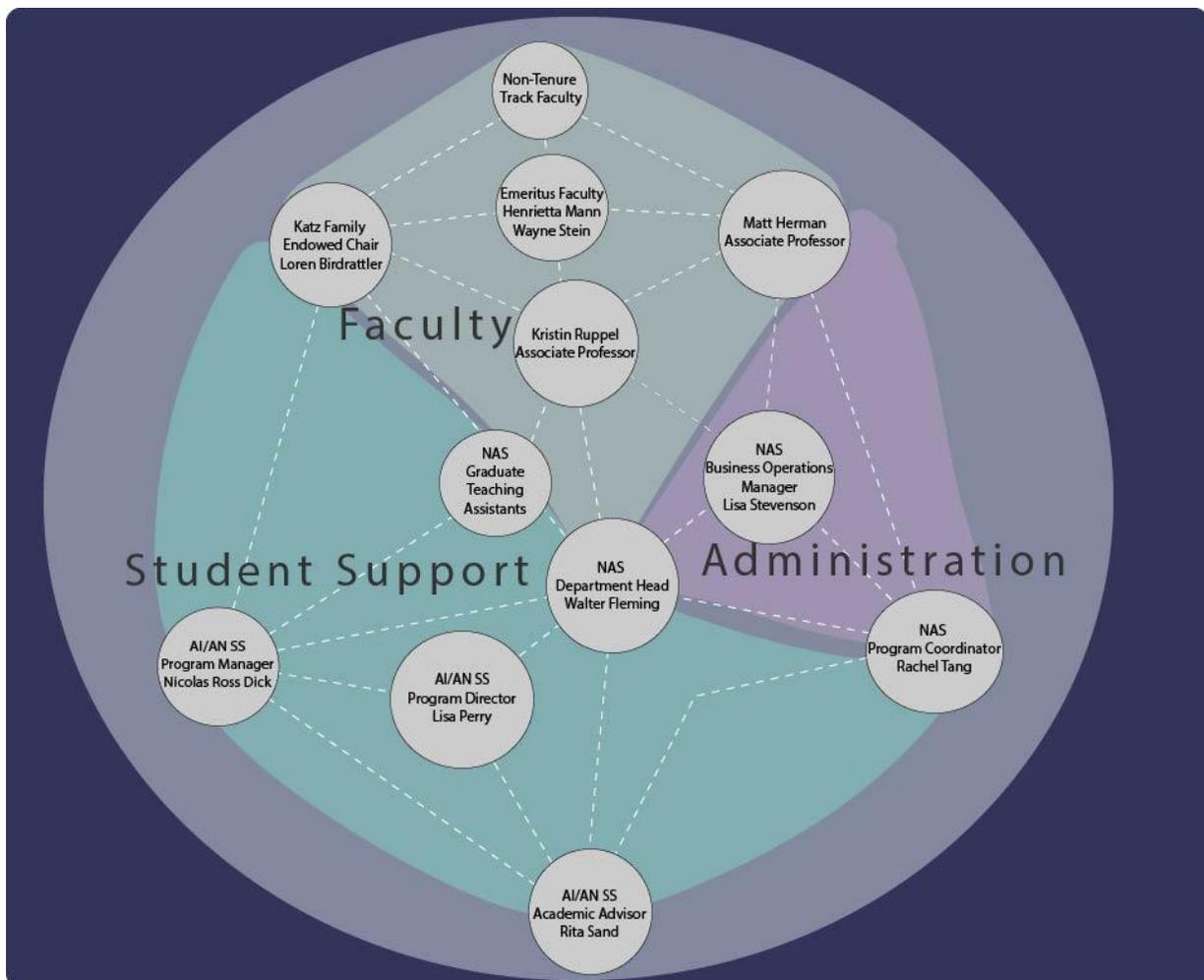


Fig 7: NAS Department and Student Success Services Flowchart (Rachel Tang)

The NAS Department has 5 full-time and 1 part-time administrative and support staff. The administrative leader is the Head of the Department and director of Native American Studies

program, who is responsible to the Dean of the College of Letters and Science. The Department Head is responsible for the overall administration and personnel supervision of professional faculty, classified (clerical support) staff and student labor personnel; administration, justification and preparation of the departmental budget, program planning, priority setting and implementation as well as performance evaluation. The duties of the NAS department head are equal to that of any academic department chair or department head with the additional responsibility of coordinating recruitment, retention, and matriculation of Native American students. The department head is the advocate for minority students and minority faculty and staff at Montana State University, and functions as a spokesperson for the Native American community.

The Department has 2.5 student support staff positions: a full-time director and a program manager of AI/AN Student Success Services, and a part-time academic advisor for MSU's (not just NAS's) over 700 Native students, many of whom use the various services offered. These services include: advocacy and support for MSU American Indian/Alaska Native students, networking with various American Indian student organizations, Native American Studies academic advising, use of the American Indian Student Success Center (aka as 'the AIC'), computer/printing/copying/fax services, phone for emergency personal use, tutoring, counseling, and referrals, emergency loans, and connection to other campus and community resources and supporters.<sup>37</sup>



**Perry, Lisa**  
**Director, Student Success**

Lisa Perry is an enrolled member of the Eastern Shoshone Tribe, located on the Wind River Indian Reservation. Ms. Perry was born and raised in the small town of Fort Washakie, Wyoming. She obtained her undergraduate degree in Renewable Resources from the University of Wyoming in 2006 and her Master of Business Administration from Grand Canyon University in 2012. Ms.

Perry has been employed in various capacities at Montana State University since 2013. She is currently the Director of the AI/AN Student Success and Advisor to the American Indian Council. These capacities have given her the direct ability to support the American Indian student body while promoting culture and education to the

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<sup>37</sup> See American Indian / Alaska Native Student Success Services webpage, at <http://www.montana.edu/aiansss/index.html>.

community. In her spare time, she loves to bead, watch various sporting events, and spend time with friends and family.

**Sand, Rita**

**Academic Advisor**

Rita Sand has been an unflinching supporter, mentor and friend to Native American/Alaska Native students on the Montana State University campus for the decades of her employment at MSU and affiliation with the Department of Native American Studies. Sand recruits and advises Native students in her welcoming office in the AI/AN Student Center in Wilson Hall. Her success, in part, is due to her deep commitment to going out into Montana’s Native American communities. She encourages students to consider a higher education pathway and then encourages them to come to MSU. She makes recruiting visits to tribal high schools, year after year, and has become a familiar, friendly face to students, school administrators and families. When Native students arrive at MSU, one of the first things they find is Sand’s friendly face and enthusiastic welcome to the center. She creates the invaluable bridge between home and university and a safe space for talking to a trusted person when times are tough.



**Nicholas Ross-Dick**

**Program Coordinator**

Nick comes from the small community of White Swan, located on the Yakama Indian Reservation in Washington State. A graduate of Montana State University, Nick earned his degree in Philosophy with a minor in Native American Studies. While a student, Nick was very active in the community, serving in leadership with MSU’s American Indian Council, Nations, and as a representative in the ASMSU student government. As a part of the American Indian/Alaska Native Student Success team, Nick works daily on the ground with students, programming educational, cultural, and social initiatives designed to engage and equip students to grow in their confidence, awareness, and flourish while at MSU.

Additionally, the Department has 2 full-time employees who staff the NAS Department office: a business operations manager, and a program coordinator. Together, these staff members often

serve as the faces of the department for new and continuing students, and the office itself provides a cozy, inviting space for everyone.



**Lisa Stevenson**  
**Business Operations Manager**

Lisa has been employed at Montana State University for 12 years, since 2008 and is the Office Manager and Fiscal Administrator of the Department of Native American Studies. She received her Bachelor's of Science in Business, Accounting Option at Montana State University. Lisa's position includes serving as the Office Manager, Fiscal Administrator and Administrative Assistant to the Department of Native American Studies. In a small department, the support staff has many duties and it is sometimes difficult to find individuals who can do all things well. Lisa is one such person. In acknowledgement of that exceptional work ethic, in the Fall of 2014, Lisa Stevenson was a recipient of a "Pure Gold" award from President Waded Cruzado. This award, in part, recognizes her dedication and commitment to making Montana State University a welcoming place to all students, but most especially for Native students. In addition, she received the College of Letters and Science Kathy Griffith Employee Excellence Award in 2016, and an MSU Employee of the Year Award in 2015.

**Rachel Tang**  
**Program Coordinator**

Rachel grew up on the Navajo Nation in Fort Defiance, AZ and Gallup, NM. She completed two years of her undergraduate degree at MSU before receiving her BA in Art History at the University of Southern California. As the Program Coordinator, Rachel advises students in all NAS programs, assists in planning NAS events and helps connect students with resources like emergency student loans and student housing. Rachel also designs the NAS marketing materials and works on recruitment efforts for the department. The couch in the NAS office is always open (though not often empty) and she loves to make students feel at home by offering them a cup of tea and a conversation.



### 3.3 Admissions, Recruitment, Quality, & Retention

The NAS Department falls under MSU’s general policies of admission and retention for all students, and provides additional resources for Native American students<sup>38</sup>, including information specific to “transfer students” because many Native students are transferring to MSU from Tribal Colleges. Interestingly, certain characteristics of full time, first time (non-transfer) freshmen who self-identified as Alaska Native and/or American Indian measured above the required qualifications in 2018, according to MSU’s Office of Planning & Analysis (see Fig. 8, below).<sup>39</sup>

Scores	Actual	Required
High School GPA	3.4	2.5
Graduating Class Percentile	66	50
Comprehensive ACT	24	22
Total SAT	1150	1120

Figure 8: Characteristics of fall 2018 full time, first time freshmen who claimed American Indian/Alaska Native as their race.

Because the NAS Department does not yet have the capacity to offer a bachelor degree, our only recruitment of undergraduates is through a Minor in NAS. Students who complete a Minor in NAS must complete 21 credits.<sup>40</sup> Often, students stumble into earning their NAS Minor after having completed many NAS credits simply out of interest. Once they discover that there is an option to minor in NAS, they enroll in the program. These students are the kind who may eventually apply for the MA in NAS.

At the graduate level, the NAS Department offers a Certificate and a Master of Arts degree.<sup>41</sup> For neither of these degree programs must students take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) as

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<sup>38</sup> See Native American Students - Undergraduate Admissions, at <http://www.montana.edu/admissions/native/index.html>.

<sup>39</sup> See Native American Students - Office of Planning & Analysis, at <http://www.montana.edu/opa/students/nativeamerican/index.html>.

<sup>40</sup> See Undergraduate Minor Courses - Native American Studies, at [http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/minor\\_courses.html](http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/minor_courses.html).

<sup>41</sup> See Online Graduate Certificate Program Overview - Native American Studies, at <http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/online.html>; and Graduate Program Overview - Native American Studies, at <http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/grad.html>.

a requirement of admission. Instead, the Department recognizes that students arrive at the university with many forms of knowledge, gained through formal and informal education. We honor that, especially for Indigenous students, these formal and informal kinds of education may include ways of knowing, being and doing that are outside of, or are unrecognized as having value by a formal Western education. Though we currently have no policy that specifically incorporates *how* we value Indigenous knowledge, we routinely support and go to bat for students who, by standard measures of 'aptitude' may fall short of the minimum. For example, if a prospective graduate student comes to us with a low GPA but strong letters of reference and statement of interest, we can and do petition the Graduate School to waive its minimum GPA requirement in the interest of playing to the student's strengths, especially when (as with the Graduate Record Exam), the grades themselves are not necessarily a good indicator of graduate level performance and ability.

MSU offers--and the NAS Department supports in a variety of ways--a number of resources directed at the recruitment and retention of Native students. These are listed in a Native American Resource Directory maintained by MSU.<sup>42</sup> An outstanding example of one such resource is the Return to Learn program:

*The Office of Return to Learn (R2L) and Department of Native American Studies, together, share the goal of returning Native American students who previously attended Montana State University (MSU) to come back and finish their degrees. Through generous foundational support, R2L supports students through scholarships and helps advance robust recruitment efforts.*<sup>43</sup>

## Future Directions

The number of Indigenous students at MSU who are formally associated with NAS through one of our degree programs is exceedingly small compared to the number of Native students enrolled at MSU but in other degree programs. Nevertheless, the NAS Department and its AI/AN Student Success Services can, and do, influence how these students fare while they're at

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<sup>42</sup> See Native American Resource Directory, at <http://www.montana.edu/native/>.

<sup>43</sup> See Stories /testimonials - Allen Yarnell Center for Student Success, at <http://www.montana.edu/aycss/return2learn/newsandcollaborations.html>.

## STUDENT NUMBERS

**Interestingly,** certain characteristics of full time, first time (non-transfer) freshmen who self-identified as Alaska Native and/or American Indian measured above the required qualifications in 2018.

MSU. We seek to grow that influence in order to provide an ever more meaningful and positive experience for Native students who choose MSU.

In keeping with our understanding of Indigenous Student **Well-being** as developed during the collective work that led to our Eligibility Application in 2019 (see Figure 9, below), we realize that every student who arrives at our institution is on a journey, on their own path of belonging with their Native community. Through interviews and a survey of members of Native nations represented among MSU students, we came to understand the important identity work that is done while our students are away from *Home*, and the necessity of making room in their *home* at MSU for nurturing that work. The ongoing nature of identity work was acknowledged as part of the personal experience of elders that were interviewed. Likewise, we came to understand the moment we are in with respect to decolonization and the way in which an added emphasis on identity work is occurring. For Native communities, identity work happens in a certain context wherein the individual is valued as part of the collective--in a relationship of responsibility and reciprocity. Young people are often given opportunities to discover their gifts with consideration for how they can contribute to the **well-being** of the whole--the community. In doing so, the path of belonging is a path of self-discovery in the context of community. As students leave *Home*, and come to their *home* at MSU, we own our responsibility for nurturing the continuation of discovery that began with their first teachers--their family, community, and homeland.

Likewise, we recognize that every native student that comes to MSU is somewhere on a continuum of knowledge that includes *introducing, equipping, engaging, and reciprocating* knowledge within the community. There are various entry points for our students in the community that is their *home* at MSU. Our faculty and staff are concerned with meeting each student where they are and finding ways to acknowledge and nurture the knowledge of each student in this *home*. Knowledge, for many, is where that path starts, with the sharing of their own personal story which for many identifies what their interests and needs are. Following the spiral seen in Figure 9, below, the student may follow a path toward the center through *Knowledge, Relationship, Land and Sovereignty*. However, as was mentioned before, this figure should be seen as more of a web than a directional path, since students start, end and return to various places along the spiral. Each of the four quarters depicted in the model represents four of the ways in which the American Indian/ Alaska Native Student Support center and the Native American Studies department assist in the growth of their students. Through *knowledge*, we help the students learn more about themselves and their culture by introducing them to the student community. In that community, the students are encouraged to establish and tend *relationships* in the community and with other students, with the goal of eventually

participating in the community itself. Since the end goal of this work is making sure the students feel at home, we encourage them to form a relationship with this place, beginning with the acknowledgement of its original stewards, but also providing opportunities for students to spend time on the land, whether hiking, getting to know our campus landscape, or at a sweat (see also, Section 1.6, above).

Since members of our Native student community come from a variety of tribal nations, we work with the similarities that are found between Indigenous groups, while also acknowledging the specific differences among them. Whether out on the land or at a sweat, smudging with sweetgrass, cedar or sage, praying with the pipe or without, prayers that are conducted in public spaces, or blessings before faculty meetings and shared meals... we are on our own path of understanding how to best give each student what they need.



Photo caption: Prayers and smudging conducted during vigil for women who have gone missing during the MMIWG epidemic. Jill Falcon Mackin speaks.

Currently, we are allowed to smudge in certain rooms around the university, particularly in the Native American Studies department, student center, and other rooms that are deemed to

have good ventilation by the University. However, with the addition of the new building and the specifically made drum room, we will have a specific location and hub for the indigenous spiritual aspects of our students lives, and a safe place to conduct ceremony and blessings without interruption.

Landscaping around the new American Indian Hall also takes this aspect of Native student **well-being** into account, as plans are shaped by our Indigenous advisors' concerns for the **well-being** of the plant and animal relatives who will be invited to live there. In fact:

*[t]he overall site plan design for American Indian Hall goes beyond a typical landscaping plan. By providing a fire feature embedded within a semi sheltered arbor, the design speaks to Tribal tradition and American Indian heritage. In plan view, the location of everything on the site responds in concentric circles from the orientation of the drum room. The entrance that celebrates the east entry provides large boulders to sit on. The boulders come from out of the plains between Great Falls and Harlowtown. They hold hundreds of years of lichens and are filled with holes that the wind and rain have created. [...] Rectilinear rocks will be extracted from the Polson area of the Flathead region. The design intent is not only in its aesthetic graphic capability, but in its capacity to reflect a home away from home by mirroring a material choice seen on tribal lands.*

*Cultural Outreach Report, p. 16 (see Appendix F)*

Finally, the Buffalo Nations Food Systems initiative was conceived of as a way to integrate tending the land into students' experience of higher--and the highest--education we can provide. The **well-being** of our students may express itself in their understanding of true *sovereignty*, as well as in the myriad ways in which they come to understand their unique place within the United States as Indigenous persons.

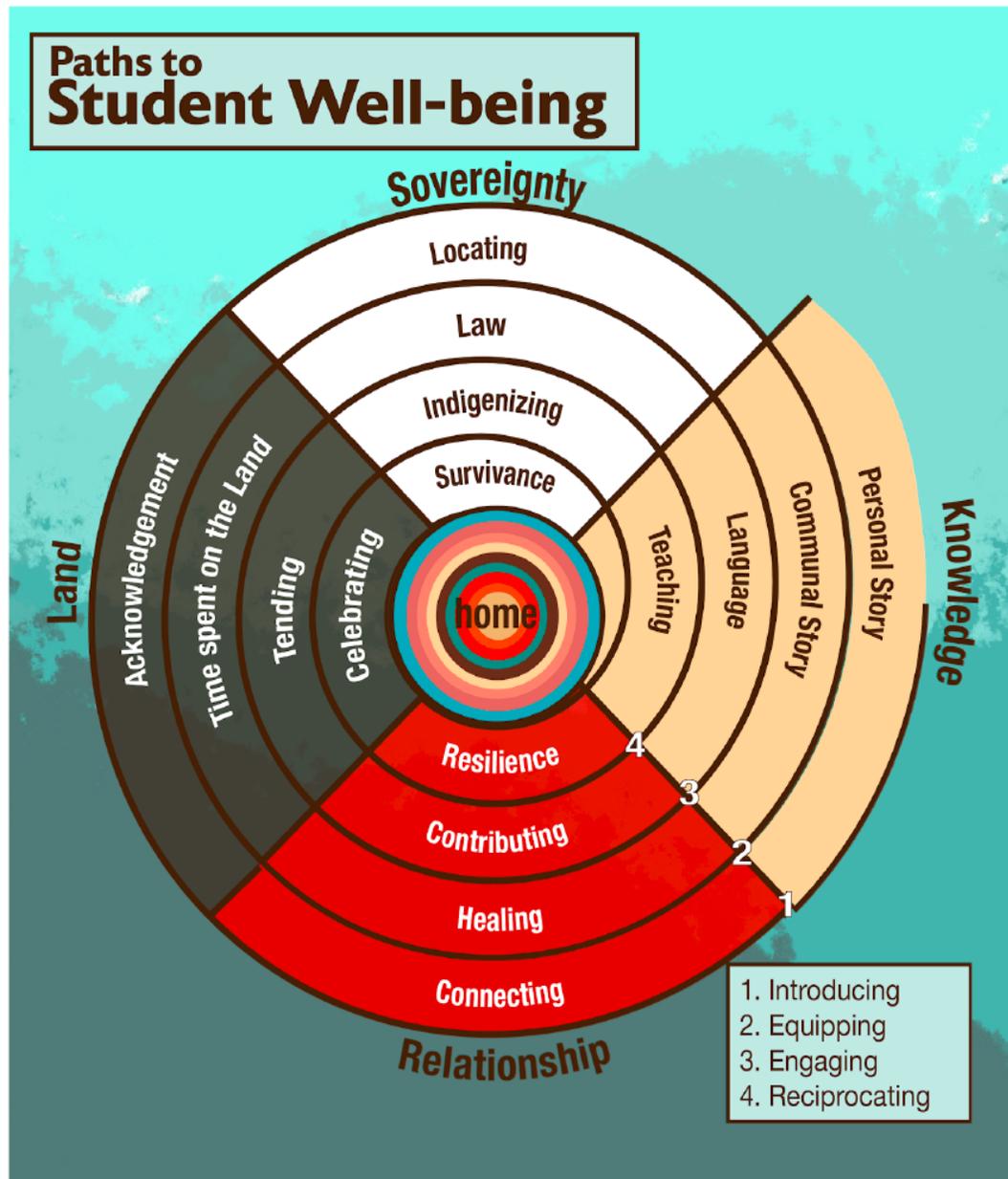


Figure 9: Paths to Student Well-being

### 3.4 Public Information, Data & Communication

The following table lists the places and ways--both modern and traditional--that our stakeholders can find information about the Native American Studies Department and its activities. Through official university and departmental communications that are mainly Internet-based (websites, listservs), the department adheres to a policy of transparency in disseminating information and data. It also uses a wide range of practices, both modern and

traditional, to ensure that the broader Native community is aware of and has opportunities to comment upon our activities and efforts. Most important among these channels for two-way communication between the department and the communities it serves are: the MSU Council of Elders, to which the Department formally reports twice per year; the AI/AN Student Success Services' weekly Talking Circle; formal and informal student advising; public presentations by faculty, staff and administration at a variety of venues, including nationally broadcast radio shows like Native America Calling; announcements and advertisements in Indian Country Today digital Indigenous news network; informal language workshops through the AIC; and board service by faculty and staff with various organizations on campus and off.

Type of Information	Modern means of Communication	Traditional means of communication	Online Sources
<b>Purposes and Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-NAS Website</li> <li>-NAS Program Directory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Student Advising</li> <li>-Word of Mouth</li> <li>-Elders Council</li> <li>-Public Presentations</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/about.html">http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/about.html</a></p> <p>Academic Assessments (PDF):<a href="http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/Assessments.html">http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/Assessments.html</a></p>
<b>Admission Requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-NAS Website</li> <li>-NAS Program Directory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Student Advising</li> <li>Word of Mouth</li> </ul>	<p>MA:<a href="http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/grad.html">http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/grad.html</a></p> <p>Online Certificate: <a href="http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/online.html">http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/online.html</a></p> <p>Undergraduate:<a href="http://www.montana.edu/admissions/">http://www.montana.edu/admissions/</a></p>

<b>Data and Procedures</b>	-Native Student Admission and Retention data from MSU Office of Planning & Analysis  -NAS and AIC listservs (email)	-Public Presentations	Native Student Admission and Retention data from MSU Office of Planning & Analysis: <a href="http://www.montana.edu/opa/students/nativeamerican/index.html">http://www.montana.edu/opa/students/nativeamerican/index.html</a>  Graduate School Policies and Procedures: <a href="http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/">http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/</a>
<b>Academic rules and Regulations</b>	-Graduate Handbook  -MSU Website  -NAS and AIC listservs (email)	-Student Advising	<a href="https://www.montana.edu/policy/">https://www.montana.edu/policy/</a>  <a href="http://catalog.montana.edu/code-conduct-policies-regulations-reports/">http://catalog.montana.edu/code-conduct-policies-regulations-reports/</a>
<b>Program and Course Requirements</b>	-NAS Website  -Graduate Handbook  -NAS Program Directory  NAS and AIC listservs (email)	-Student Advising -Peer to Peer Network (i.e. word of mouth)	MA: <a href="http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/grad.html">http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/grad.html</a>  Online Certificate: <a href="http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/online.html">http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/online.html</a>  Undergraduate: <a href="http://www.montana.edu/admissions/">http://www.montana.edu/admissions/</a>
<b>Costs and Refund Policies</b>	-MSU Website	-Student Advising -Word of Mouth	<a href="http://catalog.montana.edu/expenses/">http://catalog.montana.edu/expenses/</a>
<b>Student Rights and Responsibilities</b>	-Graduate Handbook  MSU Website	-Student Advising -Word of Mouth	<a href="http://www.montana.edu/deanofstudents/studentrights.html">http://www.montana.edu/deanofstudents/studentrights.html</a>
<b>Academic Credentials of Faculty and Administrators</b>	-NAS Website  -Publications	-Word of Mouth -Public Presentations	<a href="http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/directory/index.html">http://www.montana.edu/nativeamerican/directory/index.html</a>

<b>Events, Opportunities</b>	-NAS and AIC listservs (email)  -NAS Facebook Group		<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/55238552270/">https://www.facebook.com/ groups/55238552270/</a>
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*Future Directions*

In March 2019, the Piikani (Blackfeet)/Native Land Project partnership received a million dollar grant from the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR), with the requirement of 100% match from other non-federal sources (indicating that we are collaborating with a broad variety of other funders and partners who are underwriting the additional million dollar match). A key deliverable under that Indigenous-led project is the development of an **Indigenous research** network focusing (first) on holistic approaches to a primary area of concern for every Native nation in the region: food sovereignty. In collaboration with MSU Library, a proposed website is to replicate the outcomes of the partnership between Piikani/Blackfeet and NAS’s Native Land Project, through mutual capacity building in the area of food sovereignty within a larger network of food sovereignty collaborators. Individuals who may participate in the network include food sovereignty workers affiliated with Native nations, county, state and federal offices, tribal colleges, universities, private individuals and non-profit organizations. Networking among these collaborators is already occurring in event settings in the region and at the national and international levels. What is envisioned through development of this website is a robust and continual hub of connectivity for food sovereignty collaborators which will result in the exchange of data and ideas, while expanding capacity for all through network collaboration. Food sovereignty practitioners are often working in an uphill battle of resources, time, and need. To ease this burden, this website and the resulting food sovereignty network will provide easy access to relevant data that can be used in program development and funding proposals; policy information to empower both self-determination around food systems and vital policy change; success stories from a wide variety of food sovereignty initiatives; and relational development around collaboration. This network exchange is important to Indigenous food sovereignty collaborators as its stands to augment food sovereignty and, in turn broader sovereignty for Native communities. The work of taking back Native food systems is the work of self-determination. Native communities are not sovereign as long as they do not control their food.

Additionally, the **Indigenous Research Initiative** described in Sec. 2.5, above, is envisioned as an institution-wide infrastructure for communicating Indigenous research priorities from Tribes

and tribal communities to the MSU community, with the intention that Indigenous-led research programs will bring much needed attention and resources to Native communities.

**For example, the “Trust Land Owner Guides”** shown in the powerpoint slide below (see Figure 10) were developed during the first year of the FFAR-funded project, “Blackfeet Innovation Pathways to Food Sovereignty: Sustainability through Indigenous Applied Research Partnerships.” These guides are a direct outcome of strategic planning sessions conducted with Blackfeet community members and tribal leaders, and will be provided as educational tools for Native ‘trust land’ owners who must negotiate needlessly complicated federal legal processes in order to be able to make decisions about their allotted lands.<sup>44</sup> Several students, both Native and non-native, have been involved as paid research assistants during the community-based ground-truthing process of checking for accuracy and utility of the guides, providing invaluable experiences for students to learn and use **Indigenous research** methodologies. The ultimate aim of the guides, however, is not to perpetuate or just ease the burden of what is, after all, a structurally unfair and deeply colonized process that has its roots in one of the largest federal land grabs in U.S. history (under the General Allotment Act of 1887). Rather, under the direction of tribal leadership, the aim of this project is to look for areas where the tribe, itself, can exercise its sovereignty in whatever ways it sees fit, including the codification of Indigenous legal standards (codes) that may one day serve to replace those imposed by the U.S. federal government. This is a long term decolonizing goal, to which we commit--and model for our students--unwavering support.

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<sup>44</sup> Trust land’ is a legal term used for land that is held in an imposed federal trust for the supposed benefit of Native land owners on reservations. Land ‘allotment’ was a 19th-20th century colonial tool meant to destroy Indigenous governance and collective ownership by the quasi-privatization of Indigenous ownership over the remnants of territories they were able to reserve to themselves.

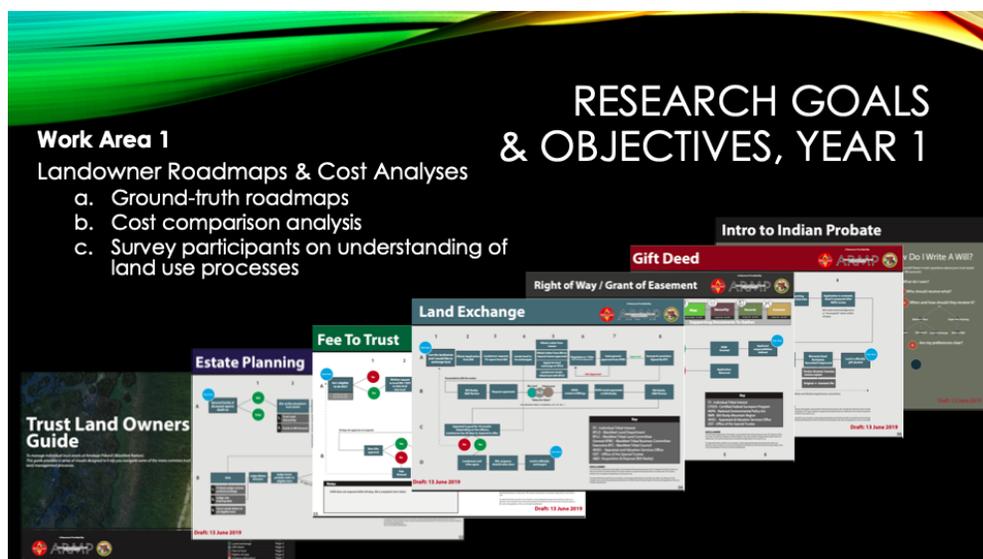


Figure 10: Examples of Trust Land Owners Guides developed under the FFAR-funded grant, “Blackfeet Innovation Pathways to Food Sovereignty: Sustainability through Indigenous Applied Research Partnerships.”

### 3.5 Financial Resources

The NAS Department currently operates under an annual State appropriated budget of \$627,345, with grant-based funding (sponsored programs) totaling \$266,584 for the 2019. In addition, private endowments of \$2,564,679 are the source of funding for the Katz Endowed Chair (Katz Family Chair in Native American Studies), the annual Berger Lecture and assorted scholarships (Phyllis Berger Quasi Endowment Funding). The department’s financial operations are ultimately under the oversight of the Montana Board of Regents, which has jurisdiction over the entire Montana University System.

According to the Montana State University Budget Office website:

*The planning and development of all University fund budgets is ongoing and monitored on a regular basis by budget/fiscal officers and management. While the standard approach has been to increase budgets by the approved pay plan, inflationary adjustments and approved enhancements, MSU now has a Strategic Plan to guide its overall direction. **Going forward, the budget planning process will also include performance funding metrics focused***

***toward retention rates, undergraduate and graduate degrees & certificates awarded, and research expenditures [emphasis added].<sup>45</sup>***

## Future Directions

In keeping with MSU's new Strategic Plan, "Choosing Promise," as well as our own Standards of **Indigenous Student Wellbeing**, **Research** and **Indian Education for All**, the Department of Native American Studies will advocate for a greater portion of MSU's expanding resources to be allocated to those areas that will enhance equitable partnerships with Tribes and Native communities, and increase access to the highest quality higher education possible for Indigenous students. These areas include:

- New degree programs in NAS (BA, BS, MS and PhD)
- New faculty lines to accommodate program expansion and increased student numbers that will accompany the new degree programs
- New Graduate Teaching and Graduate Research assistant lines to help recruit and retain new students

Continue to expand grant-based (sponsored program) and donor-based funding to provide increased research and outreach opportunities in areas relevant to Tribes and Indigenous communities, especially in building local capacity.

### 3.6 Financial Accountability

At the beginning of each fiscal year, Montana State University provides reports to the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) and the Board of Regents (BOR) so as to review operating budgets and evaluate expenses.<sup>46</sup> Like all departments and programs in the university system, the NAS Department undergoes periodic audits by state authorized agencies, and abides by the financial policies and procedures set by the Montana University System.

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<sup>45</sup> University Budget Office - University Budget Office, at <https://www.montana.edu/budget/>.

<sup>46</sup> Recent reports are available on the Operating Budgets page of the Montana University System website, at [https://mus.edu/data/operating\\_budgets/OperatingBudgets.asp](https://mus.edu/data/operating_budgets/OperatingBudgets.asp).

Trained in public accounting, NAS Department Business Operations Manager Lisa Stevenson holds the department faculty, staff, students and administration to the highest professional ethics and standards in order to ensure the proper execution of fiduciary duties, and sustainability in all of our operations.

### *Future Directions*

Expanding degree programs, faculty/staff and student numbers, sponsored funding, and the like will mean increased responsibilities for the NAS Department's Business Operations Manager. As it is, demands on her time are increasing as we see rising student enrollments, new faculty hires, and increased levels of grant funding, faculty travel and NAS-sponsored initiatives. In order to maintain our financial integrity and accountability as a growing department, we will seek to create a new position whose role would be to function as an assistant to the Business Operations Manager.

In addition, the Department continues to engage in fundraising to ensure our ability to assist students. We are in the process of establishing an account that is committed to cultural activities, including language instruction and visits from tribal elders.

## *3.7 Community/Institutional Resources*

Because it is within a mainstream university, the NAS Department's annual budget is appropriated by the Montana legislature through the Montana University System. To the extent possible, we redistribute those resources to the benefit of Native communities through our teaching, scholarship/research, and outreach activities. The most valuable support we receive from the Native communities we serve is the trust they place in us by sending us their family members to MSU as students and employees of the university. That support is apparent from the administrative level (e.g., MSU's Strategic Plan, Native provisions; MSU Council of Elders), to the student level (growing annual Native student enrollment), and in between (growing willingness and enthusiasm across campus to "Indigenize" MSU).

### *Future Directions*

The **Indigenous Research Initiative** described in Section 2.5 (As well as in Appendix E), above, is a primary vehicle for assessing, maintaining and expanding our levels of support from, and for the Native communities we serve. The Indigenous Research Council (oversight board) and

network that will result from that endeavor offer exciting new ways for the NAS Department-- and MSU--to ensure its viability and sustainability in ways that are relevant to Indigenous students and the communities they call Home.

### *3.8 Operational Status*

[Adapted from NAS Self-Study 2009]

The Department of Native American Studies traces its origins to 1968 when the then president of Montana State University, Bozeman (MSU) hired a counselor/advisor for the growing number of Native students enrolling at MSU. In 1974, the Center for Native American Studies (CNAS) was created and the first courses under the NAS rubric were offered. Since that time, a non-teaching minor in Native American Studies, and Graduate Certificate, and a Masters of Arts in Native American Studies have been established and are growing. Finally, in 2004, the Center for Native American Studies was granted departmental status by action of the Montana Board of Regents. It is currently one of a handful of NAS or AIS departments in the United States; most are programs that operate from within Ethnic Studies or Anthropology departments.

One of the consistencies throughout this time is the dedication of the faculty and staff toward service to Native students. In its first 40 years, there were only two counselor/advisors, and there have only been 3 in the last 10 years. The home for Native students has, since the beginning, been Wilson Hall, Room 1, the American Indian Student Center (also called the "Indian Club Room"), though that is soon to change with the construction of the new American Indian Hall slated to open in 2021.

The Department of Native American Studies is a part of Montana State University, which came into existence in 1893 and is a public unit of the Montana University System. Among the goals of Montana State University, and Native American Studies Department in particular, is to provide opportunities for American Indian students and communities. MSU welcomes Native American students of all nations and currently is a host to representatives of more than 40 tribal nations--including all of those in Montana--and at least as many U.S. states (see Figure 11: Native American Students Home of Origin Map). As of spring 2020, enrollment in the Department's degree programs (including all stages of completion) is as follows: 36 Masters students; 49 Graduate Certificate students; and 76 NAS Minor students.

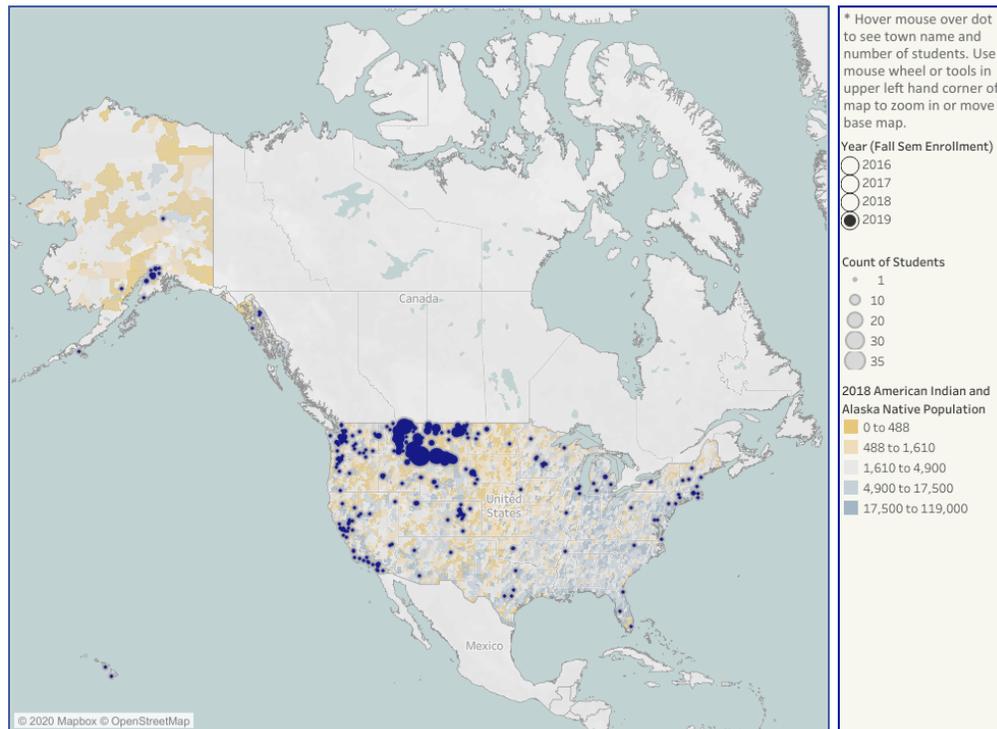


Figure 10: Native American Students Home of Origin Map, MSU Office of Planning & Analysis.<sup>47</sup>

## Future Directions

The Native American Studies Department has formally expressed its intent to develop a doctoral program, a required step that precedes approval to do so from the Montana State Board of Regents. If approved during the Board’s spring 2020 meeting, the department will begin its planning process immediately.

Additionally, bachelor degrees and a master of science degree are envisioned as potential vehicles for meaningfully engaging with and fulfilling the **Indian Education for All**, **Indigenous Student Wellbeing**, and **Indigenous Research standards** that our constituencies expect of us.

<sup>47</sup> See Native American Students Home of Origin Map for interactive version of this map, at [https://public.tableau.com/views/MSU-NativeAmericanStudents\\_0/MSU-NativeAmericanStudents?:embed=y&:embed\\_code\\_version=3&:loadOrderID=0&:display\\_count=y&:origin=viz\\_share\\_link](https://public.tableau.com/views/MSU-NativeAmericanStudents_0/MSU-NativeAmericanStudents?:embed=y&:embed_code_version=3&:loadOrderID=0&:display_count=y&:origin=viz_share_link).

### 3.9 Institutional Effectiveness

The Montana Board of Regents, Policy and Procedures Manual (Sec. 303.3) states that each campus program must undergo review every 7 years.<sup>48</sup> According to MSU's published schedule of reviews, the NAS Department's program review (including all operations, not just academics) was due during 2018-2019 school year.<sup>49</sup> Per expectations of the MSU administration, the NAS Department has kept the MSU Office of the Provost (Vice Provost Tamela Eitle) updated as to our current accreditation review with the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium, with the understanding that this would serve as our state mandated program review. Because of the extensive, collective and indigenizing nature of the WINHEC accreditation review process, we were only able to complete our Eligibility Application by the spring of 2019, and were still deeply involved in the Self-Study process during the fall of 2019 when we had originally hoped to host the WINHEC Visiting Committee on the MSU campus.

We asked MSU Vice Provost Tamela Eitle for an extension with the understanding that our review was underway, but was proceeding according to a timeline that we were not entirely in control of; and that the new goal would be to host the WINHEC Visiting Committee during spring 2020. We were careful to explain the nature of WINHEC's accreditation process, meeting in person with the Vice Provost in November 2018, and later expanding our campus outreach effort through the formation of a WINHEC Consulting Ambassadors Committee (that we keep updated via monthly emails). Because the WINHEC review process ends up supporting the Native provisions of MSU's new Strategic Plan (see Section 1.6, above), the Provost's office has remained enthusiastic and supportive even under the extended deadline. That office will also underwrite most if not all of the expenses of hosting the WINHEC Visiting Committee.

#### *Future Directions*

We are humbled and excited to follow WINHEC's lead in creating and implementing an evaluation plan that conforms to a set of standards emerging from our own Indigenous constituencies (see Section 1.6, above). This spring, several events--including inaugural meetings with members of our new **Indigenous Research Council** and Oversight Board in

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<sup>48</sup> See Montana Board of Regents, Policy and Procedures Manual, at <https://mus.edu/borpol/bor300/303-3.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup> See Program Review Schedule - Office of the Provost, MSU, at [https://www.montana.edu/provost/assessment/program\\_review\\_schedule\\_MSU.html](https://www.montana.edu/provost/assessment/program_review_schedule_MSU.html).

February and March--present extended opportunities to develop a shared understanding of our strengths, and areas in need of improvement.

### *3.10 Disclosure*

Montana State University Department of Native American Studies agrees to disclose to the WINHEC Accreditation Authority during the time of accreditation any and all such information as the Authority may require in executing its review and accreditation functions, within the scope of applicable cultural protocols and legal privacy requirements.

### *3.11 Relationship with Accreditation Authority*

Montana State University Department of Native American Studies affirms the acceptance of the WINHEC Accreditation Authority conditions and related policies and agrees to comply with these conditions and policies as currently stated or as modified in accordance with Authority policy as stated in the WINHEC Accreditation Handbook, issued August 2018.

Further, Montana State University Department of Native American Studies agrees that the Accreditation Authority may, at its discretion, make known to any agency or members of the public that may request such information, the nature of any action, positive or negative, regarding its status with the Authority. The Authority treats institutional self-study reports and evaluation committee reports as confidential. The institution, however, may choose to release the documents.



*Honesty*  
*Generosity*  
*Kindness*  
*Hard Work*

Thank You!

*Family*  
*Spirituality*  
*Humor*  
*Respect*



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