

# Tribal Education Community Institute 2023

## Recommendations for Policymakers

The 2023 Tribal Education Community Institute, co-hosted by the Leadership Institute and the All Pueblo Council of Governors, brought together around 90 tribal educators, administrators, and officials from across New Mexico, representing the Navajo Nation, the Mescalero Apache Tribe, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, and 13 Pueblos.

Participants shared tribal education goals and needs, identified challenges, and offered ideas for meeting Native students' needs. Their contributions helped to update and refine the proposals contained in the *Tribal Remedy Framework*, the collective tribal plan for transforming education following the 2018 *Yazzie/Martinez* court ruling. Participants developed concrete recommendations for state policymakers.

The Tribal Remedy Framework (TRF) is a comprehensive plan for meeting the educational needs of Native students. It has been endorsed by New Mexico's 23 Nations, Tribes, and Pueblos. The TRF is the collective tribal response to the 2018 *Yazzie/Martinez* court order and was developed jointly by tribal leaders, educators, and Indigenous education experts. TRF-related legislation is updated annually with input from tribal leaders, administrators, and educators.

### Summary of Recommendations:

#### 1. Strengthen Tribal Education Capacity:

- Expand tribal education infrastructure to allow for the creation of tribal educational pathways.
- Support and resource tribal strategic, policy, and program planning and coordination, including collaboration with school districts.
- Support tribal workforce development.

#### 2. Strengthen Tribal Education Sovereignty:

- Support tribal efforts to create balance in education, integrating Indigenous values with Western skills, and to pursue tribally defined educational success.
- Preserve and revitalize Native languages.

#### 3. Ensure School District Accountability:

- Hold districts accountable for conducting Native student needs assessments and working with Tribes to create, fund, and implement plans to meet student needs.
- Ensure that districts respect and implement tribal decisions, curricula, and cultural observances.
- Ensure that the Public Education Department enforces legal agreements and holds districts accountable for conducting meaningful tribal consultation and collaboration.

#### 4. Implement a Linguistically and Culturally Relevant Education:

- Train, hire, and retain Native teachers, language teachers, and bilingual early educators.
- Implement the Indian Education Act, especially provisions related to Native language maintenance and tribal control over schools.
- Create separate guidelines and a separate funding stream for Native language programs.
- Make Native language classes a requirement and allocate adequate class time and space.
- Ensure that districts adopt and implement a culturally relevant curriculum.

"A tribe needs to exercise its sovereign right to determine how to administer funds for delivering a basic human right: accessible, equitable and culturally grounded education."

*Tiffany Calabaza, Child Care Director,  
Santo Domingo Pueblo*

**5. Ensure Stable and Sufficient State Funding:**

- Provide adequate tribal education funding that is sustainable, consistent, flexible, long-term, and allows for self-determination.
- Make the existing Indian Education Fund more efficient and effective. Disburse funding at the start of the fiscal year, using intergovernmental agreements, and allow carry-over.
- Provide sufficient and flexible funding for early childhood education.
- Provide adequate capital and program funding for tribal libraries.

“We need resources we can count on, year after year, to build effective educational systems for our children.”  
*Kevin Shendo, Tribal Education Director, Pueblo of Jemez*

**6. Enact Education Policy Responsive to Native Students’ Needs:**

- Increase Indigenous representation in state agencies and in the legislature.
- Adopt stronger accountability and enforcement policies for school districts.
- Include tribal librarians in education policy and funding decision-making processes.
- Integrate culturally relevant health and well-being services in education.

“The *Yazzie/Martinez* case continues to be an issue of concern in New Mexico since the State and PED have not adequately implemented the court order. What is the State’s plan to ensure that this order is carried through and that funding is adequately provided?”  
*Virginia R. Chavez, Councilwoman, Pueblo of Zuni*

These recommendations reflect the proposals contained in the Tribal Remedy Framework and serve to update and refine the TRF’s legislative agenda. They show that despite an increase in general education funding, the need for targeted investments in the TRF’s solutions remains as pressing as ever.

Tribal Remedy Framework	
Goals and Results (examples)	Legislative Proposals 2024
<p><b>Strengthen Tribal Education Capacity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Native students can access tribal education programs and support services (medium-term)</li> <li>• Tribes can be effective partners to school districts and hold them accountable (short-term)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tribal Education Trust Fund:</b>                      Stable, consistent, and flexible funding for tribal education operations and programs, recurring and growing year after year.</p>
<p><b>Strengthen Tribal Education Sovereignty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased tribal control over schools</li> </ul>	<p><b>Enact a State-Tribal Education Compact</b> to allow tribally controlled, state-funded schools.</p>
<p><b>Implement the Indian Education Act</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full use of available funding (short-term)</li> <li>• IEA funded to a level sufficient for full implementation (medium-term)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reform the Indian Education Fund</b> to align funding procedures with tribal sovereignty and ensure efficient, effective, and timely distributions.</p>
<p><b>Build Tribal Education Infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All tribal libraries have adequate facilities to serve as community education hubs (short-term)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Invest in Tribal Libraries’</b> construction and renovation (phase 3 capital outlay).</p>
<p><b>Ensure Cultural &amp; Linguistic Relevance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1400 additional Native teachers (long-term)</li> <li>• 8 Indigenous languages preserved (medium-term)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Fund Indigenous higher ed. programs and Tribal Colleges</b> to train Native teachers, ed. leaders, social &amp; health services staff; to create curricula, language programs, etc.</p>