



Topic: Status Report on Service to WRIR; Funding and Governance Concerns

To: Select Committee on Tribal Relations

From: Brad Tyndall, Ph.D., CWC President;
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The Wind River Indian Reservation (WRIR) is at the heart of Fremont County and it is a very important part of Central Wyoming College's mission to transform lives and strengthen communities. As briefly outlined below, in partnership with both Reservation tribes, we believe we have made impressive strides in expanding academic programming, outreach and economic development over the last several years. CWC acknowledges the relative poverty on the WRIR and we believe CWC can play a transformational role for the reservation's future, for all our common future.

Adequate Funding for Economic Development:

Unfortunately, given the State's fiscal crisis, we face yet more budget cuts that threaten our ability to sustain our efforts. **We believe the State should invest more, not less, in socio-economic revitalization of the Reservation.** Fortunately, the State recognizes the importance of education. Improved student success for Native Americans in Wyoming is a part of the State's Educational Attainment Executive Council 2018 Executive Orders goals and 2019 SEA61.

Governance Concerns:

Beyond fiscal concerns to our future ability to serve the WRIR, we see that some elected officials are considering governance changes for the State's colleges, erroneously thinking this would save money. **CWC is naturally concerned of any college governance or funding changes that adversely affects CWC's ability to serve the WRIR; or impedes its students from getting a local academic experience, with greater prospects for student success, close to home, that connects their education to their culture and families.**

I believe the Wyoming Community College Commission is a solid governance system for coordinating the colleges under a common Wyoming banner. Two leading voices in higher education, the SHEEO (State Higher Education Executive Officers Association) and WICHE (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education) speak highly of the current system. The personal finance organization [WalletHub](#) ranked Wyoming as having the best community college system.

In one of the biggest pieces of news below, we are proud to report that CWC is now a **Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution (NASNTI)**. With this comes important federal support. The NASNTI designation only happens with CWC being a single institution that serves the reservation. If we were

subsumed by another entity, the combined institution would no longer qualify due to the reduced percentage of tribal students versus the overall size of the student population.

Below is a brief synopsis of some of CWC's recent work to date:

American Indian Studies

- CWC provides the state's only associate degree in American Indian Studies program, under the leadership of Ph.D. Tarissa Spoonhunter.
 - Dr. Tarissa Spoonhunter was selected by the *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* as one of only 15 scholars as a 2018 Emerging Scholar.
 - She conducted a Nation-Building Seminar for the Northern Arapaho Business Council on tribal leadership and governance and Intergovernmental relations. She leads the new bachelor's degree in Tribal Leadership.
 - The most recent research awards for Dr. Spoonhunter and others include:
 - National Science Foundation (NSF) EPSCoR Microbiome Project CWC Program for the Wind River Indian Reservation(WRIR) Microbiome Intern and Mentorship Program; she is also the Education Outreach and Diversity Tribal Liaison.
 - Internships for tribal students with Fish and Wildlife in elk, bighorn sheep and mule deer collaring. Data Collection of fish and wildlife maintaining the trust relationship with the tribes of the Wind River Tribes.
 - National EPSCoR Panelist for Minorities in STEM Oct 2019 Colombia, SC.
 - Workshops/meetings for community programs and tribal programs to help build capacity for the Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Tribal Water Engineers Drought Planning and Water Board, Wind River Tribal College Archives, Micro-grants to K-12 and community members for STEM-Traditional Ecological Knowledge on the WRIR.
 - \$86,460 over 5 years
 - \$739,619 National Science Foundation CIRCLES Alliance(sub grantee on a 6-State Consortium) grant to research indigenous-based STEM education, to address the under-representation of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines and workforce.
 - Goal: The project will look to develop AI/AN-based STEM education activities for K-12 and higher education students, as well as become a model for partnering with tribal communities to advance Indigenous-based STEM education. Ultimately, the project aims to support tribal communities in producing a STEM-ready workforce to meet their communities' unique economic development needs.
 - \$97,510 to CWC for one year
 - USDA New Beginning for Tribal Students (sub on a UW Grant)

- Goal: Expand Native American Summer Institute at UW to CWC, develop an American Indian Student orientation, increase mentorship opportunities
- Amount: \$120,000 over 4 years
- National Science Foundation (NSF ATE) Grant being submitted:
 - Goal: The Geospatial Education Outreach Bridges (GEOBridges) project will develop innovative strategies to recruit, educate, and retain students to prepare them to meet industry needs for GIST technicians. These activities will focus on the unique needs of American Indian students, which make up 14% of Central Wyoming College (CWC) student body but only 5% of the current geospatial program students
 - Amount: \$300,000 over 3 years

Bachelor's in Tribal Leadership & Other Leadership Development

The future of the WRIR depends on its current and future leaders to find solutions and design systems to secure a sustainable future. With the endorsement of both tribal business councils, approval by the Wyoming legislature and the Higher Learning Commission, CWC began a BAS in Organizational Management and Leadership, with an emphasis area in Tribal Leadership. **This fall, we have 15 students enrolled in the program.**

CWC strives to find leadership opportunities for our Native students. Last year, CWC's Alpine Science Institute went to the peak of Mt. Kilimanjaro. Student Jada Antelope completed the research expedition and became the first female Northern Arapaho person to ascend the famous mountain. Gabe Spoonhunter participated in the expedition in 2019 as the first Northern Arapaho man to ascend the mountain.

For 2021, the Alpine Science Institute is taking several American Indian students on a research bike trip from Canada to Wyoming.

Economic Development

Dr. Spoonhunter and CWC business professor Kyle Trumble, with funding and support from the University of Wyoming, have conducted Reservation Economic Development (RED) workshops, culminating in a business plan pitch day and an award. The Wind River Start-up Challenge awarded \$25,000 on Pitch Day split between 5 tribal entrepreneurs. There are currently 18 semi-finalists in this year's competition that kicked off November 2020 with and added \$5,000 from Wells Fargo for the Wind River Start-up Challenge.

Under the direction of Dean Lynne McAuliffe, we implemented a tribal arts boot camp within a Native American Artist Entrepreneurship Program.

CWC obtained a USDA Beginning Farmer/Rancher Development Program Grant to support agricultural economic development on the Reservation and the entire region.

- Goal: to develop the Wind River Farm Incubator at the Alpine Science Institute (aka Sinks Canyon Center). The Reservation's Wind River Food Sovereignty Project is a sub-awardee of this grant. We will employ a Program Coordinator to mentor and transport beginner farmers from the WRIR to the ASI, also will provide a pipeline of fresh food to the WRIR farmer's markets
- Total: \$300,000 over 2 years

Institute of Tribal Learning (non-credit/outreach), under Mr. Ivan Posey

The Institute of Tribal Learning was initiated at Central Wyoming College in 2007. The mission of the Institute is to provide education and information to our students and the general public on historical and contemporary information regarding the Wind River Tribes and the Reservation. The Inter-Tribal Education and Community Center (ITECC) is where most of the activities were held with a few in Jackson, Wyoming.

- Developed **American Indian Advisory Council** made up of tribal education leaders and community members. The council meets every other month to discuss and make recommendations on certain issues regarding educational issues related to tribal students.
- Created Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with both tribes sharing in the creation of CWC-Wind River, offering classes in Ethete and Fort Washakie.
- Contracted with the Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO) group to conduct a community-based assessment on how CWC can better serve students and the Reservation.
- Coordinated with Wind River tribes on issues such as educational issues, CWC-Wind River, transportation, local schools and strong relations.
- Developed the *Nations within a Nation* speakers series, brought to Riverton, Jackson and soon to other communities
 - What makes an Indian: Tribal Identity and Blood Quantum
 - Education on the Wind River Indian Reservation: Past and Present
 - Natural Resource Management: Water Environmental Issues on the Wind River Indian Reservation
- Created and managed the *Indian Relay* Podcast with partnership with *County 10* and Wyoming Department of Transportation. We have done 14 interviews with the first done in July 2020. The purpose of the podcast is to interview tribal members who have a story to tell about their own tribalism and life experiences. There will be tribal students assisting in the interviews. The podcast has been received very well with great reviews.
- Created the *Pathways* Newsletter from the CWC's President's Office
- Organized annual powwows in coordination with CWC's United Tribes Club. Last year, conducted a powwow in Jackson.
- Created and dedicated a Wall for Veterans in ITECC. There are currently 115 photos of Veterans and we expect more in the future.
- Assisted with the rejuvenation of the ITECC with new carpet, painting and lighting. We will host an opening soon.

- Assisted students with funding to cover books and transportation costs (gas cards).
- Coordinated with tribal members and programs to utilize facilities and rooms.

American Indian Student Support & Success

As stated above, CWC is now a **Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution (NASNTI)**. We gained this status in the last year. This will allow us more access to federal funds to better serve the WRIR. We have already obtained a NASNTI grant. In 2020, we hired Rory Tendore to lead in our new student support initiative as our American Indian Student Services Coordinator. We will soon hire a student support position to be housed on the Reservation.

NASNTI Grant

- Goal: Strengthen the institution to increase retention and graduation rates of American Indian students. The five-year project draws on the suggestions of our local American Indian community as well as the literature on Americana Indian student success that calls for a “family-like atmosphere” at the school.
- Amount: \$1.5 million over 5 years
- We are concerned that after the grant, State budget cuts will severely hamper our ability to pick up the cost of new employee salaries.

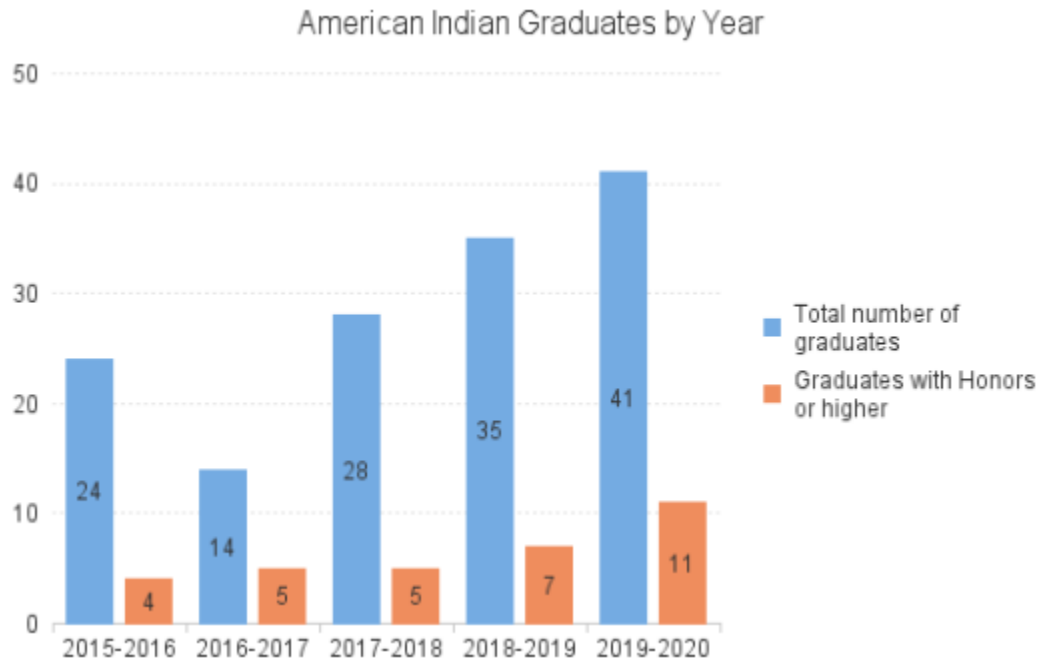
Student Enrollment and Success Trends

- **Tribal students account for 15% of the student body for Fall 2020.** Currently there are 231 self-identified American Indian students enrolled at CWC.
- Below is the recent history of American Indian enrollments at CWC. The reported numbers may be under-representing actual numbers more and more through time as some students decide not to report their ethnicity on CWC documents. The numbers below show that the percentage of Native American students typically stays between 12 and 15 percent.

	TOTAL American Indian	All students	% Total American Indian
2015FA	291	2195	13.26%
2016SP	228	1861	12.25%
2016SU	54	382	14.14%
2016FA	262	2022	12.96%
2017SP	217	1628	13.33%
2017SU	48	388	12.37%
2017FA	213	1992	10.69%
2018SP	237	1693	14.00%
2018SU	53	393	13.49%
2018FA	260	2020	12.87%
2019SP	203	1573	12.91%
2019SU	54	358	15.08%
2019FA	272	2004	13.57%
2020SP	223	1599	13.95%
2020SU	45	358	12.57%
2020FA	231	1551	14.89%

- CWC serves approximately 40 High School Equivalency students in Fort Washakie each year.
- In 2019-2020, CWC served 24 students through 16 different CWC Wind River classes in Ethete and Fort Washakie.

- In 2019-2020, CWC served 54 high school students through concurrent enrollment courses at Wind River Indian Reservation High Schools.
- American Indian students have the lowest **success rates** of any racial/ethnic group at CWC, as measured by the percentage who successfully complete at least 2/3 of their credits and earn at least a 2.0 GPA each semester. **However, this has improved enormously over time.** In 2015 fall, 41% of American Indian students met this standard of “satisfactory academic progress.” By 2019 fall, 56% did, a remarkable gain of 15 percentage points.
- **The number of American Indian graduates greatly increased over the past few years, as has the number of American Indian students graduating with honors:**



We are grateful to the State of Wyoming and the Select Committee on Tribal Relations for their support for the socio-economic and cultural well-being of the Wind River Indian Reservation. When we all partner together, we can continue to accomplish great things for our State.

Should you need any additional information, we would be happy to provide you with it.

Brad Tyndall, Ph.D.
CWC President