

MEMO

TOPIC: Central Wyoming College Support to Wind River Indian Reservation & Tribal Students
TO: Select Committee on Tribal Relations
FROM: Brad Tyndall, Ph.D., President of Central Wyoming College
DATE: June 2023

Dear Member of the Select Committee:

CWC was founded in 1966 and statutorily serves Fremont, Hot Springs and Teton counties. We are proud to say that the Wind River Indian Reservation (WRIR), with members of the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes, is at the heart of the service area and at the heart of CWC’s Fremont County Community College district. American Indians make up a large percentage, around 20%, of Fremont County’s approximate 40,000 residents (US Census Bureau). In terms of CWC’s credit offerings, American Indians make up roughly 15%. (The exact percentage is not known since some students choose not to provide ethnographic information or select “multiple races”. About 8% self-identify as solely Native American.)

In Support of Tribal Colleges, CWC’s approach involves three pillars:

1. Academics: American Indian Studies, Tribal Leadership & Research



Eric Bennett
(Lead Faculty)



Dr. Mark Nordeen
(Dean over CWC- WR)



Dr. Kathy Wells
(Academic VP)

Adjuncts faculty:
Tarissa Spoonhunter,
Marlin Spoonhunter,
Jason Baldes
Ben Evans
Harmony Spoonhunter
Others

2. Student Support Services as a Native-American Non-Tribal Institution (NASNTI)



Rory Tendore
(AI Student
Coordinator)



Lisa Applehans
(Student Support
Coordinator)



Dr. Cory Daly
(Student VP)

**NASNTI researcher
and pre-college
and college support
staff**

3. Institute of Tribal Learning (Outreach & Support)



Ivan Posey
(Tribal Ed
Coordinator)



Cassie Weed
(Epidemiological
Data
Coordinator)

	
Dr. Brad Tyndall (President)	Beth Monteiro (Foundation)

1. American Indian Academic Programs and Programming (VP Kathy Wells, Dean Mark Nordeen, Faculty Eric Bennett, Jacki Klancher and various adjunct faculty)

After years of outstanding teaching and academic leadership, CWC's previous full-time faculty member, Dr. Tarissa Spoonhunter, has joined the University of Wyoming, although Dr. Spoonhunter continues to teach adjunct courses for CWC and we now coordinate better with UW. Dr. Spoonhunter is being replaced by **Mr. Eric Bennett**, who was her student at CWC and UW. Mr. Bennett has a demonstrated history of working in the higher education industry as a graduate teaching assistant at UW. He also taught at a local reservation high school for the past year. He is skilled in Educational Research, Leadership, Social Studies, Research, and Government Relations. He has a Master of Arts - MA degree focused in History from the University of Wyoming.

CWC is proud to be a major higher education institution in Wyoming serving over half of the American Indian Student (AIS) enrollments for the community colleges. In our Spring, 2023 graduation we had 33 AIS students. We have expanded our enrollments by providing more academic opportunities and by increasing retention through support services. In terms of academics, we have done many thing in the last few years:

- Started the BAS option in Tribal Leadership.
- Developed 3 new American-Indian focused certificates.
- Started CWC-Wind River outreach site at Fort Washakie and Ethete.
- Started new personally-transformative research experiences involving Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) field experiences and climate science expeditions.



CWC Students Aidan Hereford and Jada Antelope at the base of Mt. Everest last year.

Details of these and other academic activities are detailed in the Accomplishments sections below.

2. Support Services to Students (VP Cory Daly, Rory Tendore, Lisa Appelhans)

We have multiple staff from the tribal community who support students, including one whose entire job is supporting tribal students. We staff a center on the reservation that includes support services. We have emergency aid designated specifically for tribal students. We have one of the largest student support services grants in the region, and many participants are American Indian. **CWC became a federally designated Native American Serving Non-Tribal institution (NASNTI) in 2020.** We then received a NASNTI grant to strengthen the college so it can better serve native students. This grant allows us to embed tutors into math classes, which can be a barrier to tribal student success. We meet with every reservation high school multiple times per year, partner with various tribal entities (agencies, councils, businesses, etc.) and focus our recruitment on the entire family rather than the individual student.

In terms of scholarships, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) prohibits limiting **publicly-funded scholarships** to any category (gender, race/ethnicity, etc.) so we have not pursued expanding this. But, in our scholarship selection process we do prioritize categories that often intersect with American Indian students: low-income, returning students, first-generation, and non-traditional. We have also adjusted our scholarship process to ensure access for students who miss the traditional deadline. We do have five **private donor scholarships** that prioritize tribal students, and reserve four slots for tribal students for CWC's prestigious Student Ambassador program.

The NASNTI grant allows CWC to provide training to support American Indian Students (AIS) and fund an institutional research position that examines factors supporting tribal students. Importantly, one area we focus on is disaggregating the data so we can better understand AIS trends.

3. Outreach via CWC's Institute of Tribal Learning (ITL)

Under the leadership of Mr. Ivan Posey, with 22 years of experience on the Eastern Shoshone Business Council and the State's first Liaison to the Governor, the ITL coordinates and supports various American Indian student activities with college faculty and staff. Founded in 2017, it provides financial assistance and scholarships and maintains and operates out of CWC's Inter-Tribal Education & Committee Center (ITECC). The ITECC exhibits student contemporary arts, tribal veterans and heroes, the Stewart Collection of artifacts and much more. The ITL Coordinator serves as the college's liaison to the tribes and coordinates regular meetings and assists in various endeavors that enhance reservation communities. For example, the ITL has a relationship with the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council and has an agreement and grant to deliver some health service monitoring through two employees at the Frank Wise building in Fort Washakie.

Most recently, in 2022, the ITL established the Tribal Wisdom Society. The TWS's goal is to provide first-hand knowledge of tribal history, culture and governance to students by creating gatherings with local and out-of-state tribal members.

Moving forward, the ITL looks to expand its services to the tribes and others to assist with tribal issues relating to family support, historical trauma, substance abuse, tribal governance and more. The ITL is also developing a Summer Institute for high school students.

Many of the ITL's many activities are interspersed in the Accomplishments & Milestones sections below.

CWC ACCOMPLISHMENTS & MILESTONES IN SERVING AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS

Since its founding over 50 years ago, CWC has served thousands (5501, 11.1% of all students served, estimate) of American Indians, mostly from the WRIR. Some notably early achievements include:

- Development and delivery of associate degree in American Indian Studies, the only one in the State.
- Courses in Shoshone and Arapaho languages.
- CWC faculty teaching as adjunct faculty for the Wind River Tribal College.
- Ad hoc delivery of credit, GED, adult education and non-credit courses at various facilities on the reservation.
- Inclusion and Expansion of TRiO student support services (Upward Bound and Education Talent Search) for tribal students.
- Construction of the beautiful Inter-Tribal Education & Community Center (ITECC) on the Riverton campus.
- Inclusion of an enrolled WRIR member as an advisor to the CWC president and his cabinet (Mr. Scotty Ratliff).
- Establishment of a Construction Trades program with and at St. Stephens High School. Although this program has ended, CWC hopes to restart the program on its business park.

Since my leadership in 2016, service to the Reservation has become a major college priority. We have greatly expanded our service to the WRIR and Native students and have made sure that our approach more fully respects the autonomy of the two major tribes we serve.

Some recent accomplishments relating to supporting tribal sovereignty include:

- Now formally teaching classes at two locations on the Reservation—Fort Washakie and Ethete.
- Formation of the Wind River Inter-Tribal Advisory Committee and hiring of Mr. Ivan Posey. In his capacity of as a liaison to the tribes, he has helped CWC create more respectful and formal relationships warranted for an institution serving sovereign nations, including the creation of
 - A formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Northern Arapaho Business Council for providing instruction and services on the WRIR.
 - A similar MOU with the Eastern Shoshone Business Council
 - A MOU with both tribes on a more robust Institutional Research Board/process (IRB), which is a project still in process.
 - Establishment of the Tribal Wisdom Society for CWC students.
 - Establishment of a new Tribal Historic Preservation degree and certificates in close collaboration with the Reservation's two Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPO). We feel more confidence that their history and artifacts are being more directly managed by the tribes.

Some accomplishments relating to “indigenizing” and expanding operations to better serve students:

- Establishing the **Institute of Tribal Learning (ILT), led by Mr. Posey**. The Institute of Tribal Learning coordinates American Indian services through continued education on historical and contemporary issues. The Institute provides a positive influence to educate tribal and non-tribal community members of American Indian issues on a local and national scale.
Of note, the ITL has
 - Contracted with the **Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO) organization** to get assistance in understanding and serving native populations. The AIO conducted a two-day community gathering to gain input from WRIR tribal members to identify key areas for CWC and our communities to focus on.
 - **Established the Tribal Wisdom Society**. The program offers an opportunity for students to learn about the history and contemporary issues related to tribal people and governments, both locally and out-of-state. They learn of governance structures, culture and traditions of their own and other tribes and historical and contemporary issues. They receive Indigenous Leadership training and then visit other reservations to discuss ideas and issues with other tribal leaders and organizations. The focus of the program is contribution. Each participant is required to do a community project that will be focused on the Wind River Indian Reservation.
 - Expansion of Reservation discussions via **Speakers Series** to include issues most relevant to tribal members (e.g., Blood quantum for tribal enrolled membership)
 - Expansion of tribal art and other exhibits most relevant to the WRIR. Continued work on the **“Valley of the Three World” project**. This a large collection of audio cassettes and photos of tribal members, many who have passed, that will be digitized and made available.
- Becoming an official **Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution (NASNTI)** school. CWC is the State’s only federal minority-serving institution. We strove for this status to gain more resources to support our students.
- Established a **Wind River Advisory Committee** to gain regular feedback from tribal members on CWC’s programs. Some members include representatives from school districts, the Wind River Tribal College and members of various WR social, educational (e.g., higher education offices of both tribes) and other institutions. Some members, for example, include: Scotty Ratliff (Senator Lummus’ office), Alfred Redman (Arapaho Tribal Education), Harmony Spoonhunter (Eastern Shoshone Higher Education) and Amy Schmidt (University of Wyoming).
- Faculty and staff training about the Reservation and STEM with support of a private donor and the Colorado Wyoming Alliance for Minorities Program.

Some accomplishments relating to creating more understanding of the WRIR:

- Creation of (non-credit seminar) **Wind River 101 and Wind River 102** training for CWC and community members (Under the Institute of Tribal Learning).
- Creation of outreach **speaker series (e.g., Nations Within a Nation)** which was presented at various locations in the state (Under the ILT).
- Organization of **community powwows**
 - One annually at CWC-Riverton and now in Jackson

- Creation of “Etiquette at Powwows” mini-brochure, in partnership with the Wyoming Humanities Council.
- Creation of a **short documentary on the meaning of powwows**, in partnership with the Wyoming Humanities Council
- Annual host of the **Native American Teacher Education Conference**
- **Podcast:** “The Indian Relay”
- **Newsletter:** “Pathways”
- Support of Wyoming PBS in their outstanding work in the creation of content for the Indian Education for All.

Some accomplishments relating to WRIR economic development:

- Supporting **Start-Up Challenges of the University of Wyoming** on the Reservation (Dr. Spoonhunter and Mr. Kyle Trumble)
- **Native American Artist Entrepreneurship Program** (under CWC Dean Lynne McAuliffe)
- Support of tribal food sovereignty initiatives (e.g., sponsor or regional conferences, training to tribal members)
- Hosting Harvard University’s Native American Program on **success stories in Tribal Governance** via the State’s Pathways to Prosperity project of the Wyoming Business Council.

Of course, at the core of CWC’s mission is for-credit academics. Some accomplishment relating to more academic opportunities:

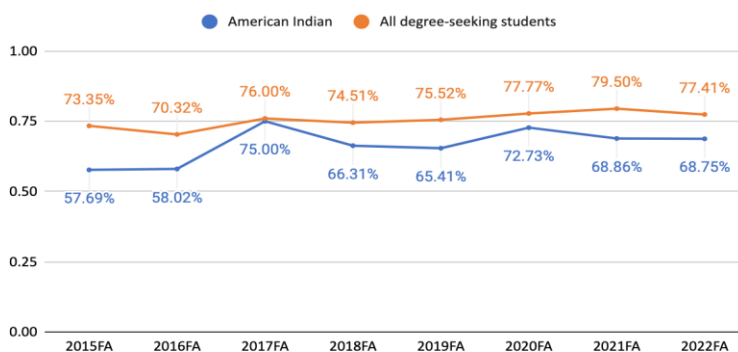
- Formal Creation of **CWC-Wind River**. Just as CWC has CWC-Riverton, CWC-Lander, CWC-Jackson and CWC-Dubois, we have now created CWC-Wind River, led by Dr. Mark Nordeen. We have been formally offering classes, mostly at the Tribal College in Ethete and at the Wise Building in Fort Washakie. For this fall, we have 17 for-credit classes offered on the Reservation.
- Creation of a Bachelors of Applied Science degree in Organizational Management & Leadership with a **Tribal Leadership BAS option**. As of Fall 2022, 27 Native Students were enrolled in the BAS, 11 in the Tribal Leadership option and 16 in the Business & Entrepreneurship option.
- CWC now offers the following American Indian certificate and degree programs. **The last four of these were just approved:**
 - BAS in Org Management & Leadership: Tribal Leadership option (120 credits)
 - AA in American Indian Studies (60 credits)
 - Certificate in American Indian Studies (18 credits)
 - **AAS in Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (64 Credits)**
 - **Tribal Leadership Advanced Certificate (18 credits)**
 - **Tribal Historic Preservation Officer I (38 credits)**
 - **Tribal Historic Preservation Officer II (19 credits)**
- **Personally Transformational Field Research Opportunities** (under Professor Jacki Klancher). These trips have created ground-breaking, role-model-establishing, firsts for both tribes.
 - Expeditions to **Mt. Everest** (1 time), **Mt. Kilimanjaro** (2 times), **Gannett Peak** (~10 times) for climate and other environmental research.

- Long-distance BIKE and HIKE trips doing environmental monitoring research.
- Local field GIS and other environmental or anthropological research,
- **STEM Research** (under Dr. Tarissa Spoonhunter)
 - UW EPSCoR National Science Foundation (NSF) CWC subaward Microbiome Intern & Mentorship Program and Microgrants for K-12/community members STEM TEK
 - NSF CIRCLES to research indigenous-based STEM TEK education
 - USDA New Beginnings for Tribal Students to expand the Native American Summer Institute at UW to CWC
 - Bison Research (with Mr. Jason Baldes & Dr. Tarissa Spoonhunter)

Below are some recent statistics on the breadth and success of our American Indian students.

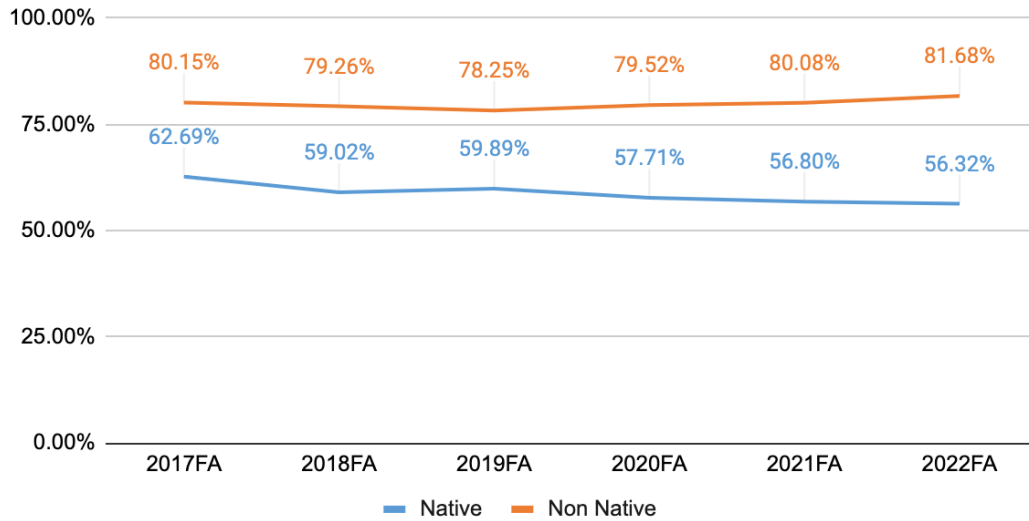
- About half of the students attending Wyoming community colleges attend CWC.
- CWC is in the 98th percentile nationally in the number of American Indian students served.
- At CWC, about 15% of our students are American Indian (330 students in 2022-23).
- These tribal students (academic year 22/23) self-identified as:
 - 40% did not specify tribal affiliation
 - 38% Northern Arapaho
 - 14 Eastern Shoshone
 - 8% from other tribes
- In May, 2023, CWC had 33 American Indian students graduate, representing 12% of total graduates. Five of these students were nursing students. One student received a BAS in Organizational Management & Leadership: Tribal Leadership Option (out of 11 BAS degrees awarded college-wide).
- Programs with the highest American Indian enrollments are:
 - AS Biology (or pre-Nursing)
 - ADN Nursing
 - BAS Organizational Management & Leadership (all options)
 - Business
 - Psychology
- There is a persistent gap in retention rates between American Indian students and the overall student population. Will continue to work on this:

Fall degree-seeking students who graduated or re-enrolled the following spring



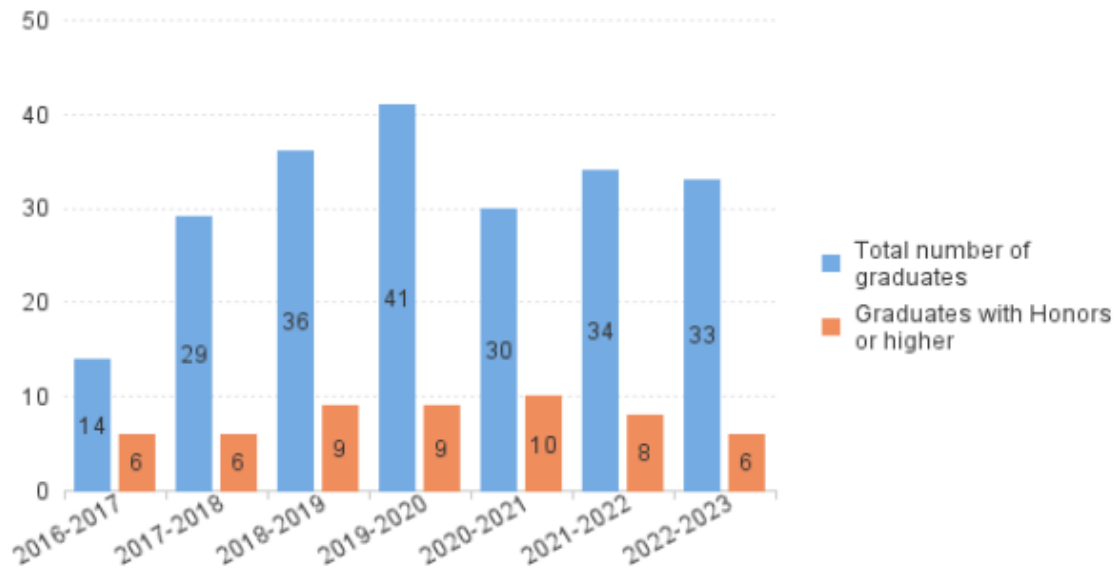
- There is also a gap in Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), defined as achieving a 2.0 GPA or above and completing at least two-thirds of courses successfully. This is someone we also need to keep working on:

Percent Satisfactory Academic Progress: Degree Seeking Fall Semester



- The number of graduates was lower than expected this year; 44 graduates were expected, but the 11 students who did not graduate are currently completing their necessary credits in Summer 2023.

American Indian Graduates by Year



Transferring to the University of Wyoming: More CWC students transfer to UW than any other place. As the data from UW's transfer site https://www.uwyo.edu/oia/files/transfer_reports/transfer-packet-2122---sample.pdf indicates about 20% of CWC's 45 transfer students to UW are American Indian, which is 9 students (Fall 2020):

Demographics Continued

Ethnicity - Fall 2020

Institution	Minority						Minority Total	White	International	Ethnicity and Race Unknown
	Hispanics of any race	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Two or More Races				
Casper	8%	1%	--	1%	1%	5%	15%	74%	1%	10%
→ Central	4%	20%	--	--	--	7%	31%	62%	--	7%
Eastern	8%	--	--	--	--	8%	16%	72%	--	12%
LCCC	10%	1%	1%	2%	--	3%	17%	69%	3%	12%
Northwest	7%	--	--	--	--	2%	9%	84%	--	7%
NWCCD	6%	2%	1%	--	1%	4%	13%	78%	--	9%
Western	14%	2%	--	--	--	5%	20%	68%	--	12%
Overall Ethnicity	8%	2%	0%	1%	0%	4%	16%	73%	1%	10%

COVID had a disproportionate impact on transfer rates of American Indians to UW in Fall 2021. Also, more students are reporting "Two or more races", 12% (below) from 7% (above).

Demographics Continued

Ethnicity - Fall 2021

Institution	Minority						Minority Total	White	International	Ethnicity and Race Unknown
	Hispanics of any race	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Two or More Races				
Casper	9%	1%	1%	1%	--	4%	17%	81%	--	1%
→ Central	6%	3%	--	3%	--	12%	24%	68%	--	9%
Eastern	6%	--	--	--	--	6%	12%	88%	--	--
LCCC	14%	--	1%	1%	--	2%	19%	78%	--	3%
Northwest	10%	--	2%	--	--	2%	13%	87%	--	--
NWCCD	13%	1%	1%	--	--	4%	18%	79%	--	3%
Western	8%	--	2%	2%	--	5%	17%	75%	2%	7%
Overall Ethnicity	11%	1%	1%	1%	--	4%	18%	79%	0%	3%

Total Number of American Indian Students: Based on student self-reporting of whether they are American Indian or Alaskan Native, even if they reported another ethnicity as well, we see that there was a drop during the COVID period and we are still bouncing back. These numbers reflect what happened with all our student enrollments.

Total Number of American Indian Students

HEADCOUNT	TOTAL American Indian	All students	% Total American Indian
2015	415	2878	14.42%
2016	386	2669	14.46%
2017	335	2650	12.64%
2018	346	2591	13.35%
2019	361	2588	13.95%
2020	320	2320	13.79%
2021	303	2344	12.93%
2022	330	2460	13.41%