# Cultivating Success:

AMERICAN INDIAN COLLEGE FUND

## The Critical Value of American Indian Scholarships and The Positive Impact of Tribal College Capital Construction

A project funded in part by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Prepared for the American Indian College Fund by Harder+Company Community Research

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With its credo "educating the mind and spirit," the Denver-based American Indian College Fund distributes scholarships and support to America's tribal colleges and universities. These unique institutions of higher education are dedicated to fighting the high rates of poverty, educational failure and cultural loss confronting American Indians.

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# Executive Summary

Since the late 1960s and early 70s, the nation's tribal colleges have played a significant role in the development of higher education of American Indians. The colleges, primarily located in the West, Southwest, Northwest and Midwest, focus on providing culturally appropriate education to American Indians on reservations and other areas with large American Indian populations. In addition, these colleges demonstrate substantial contributions to the economic empowerment and development projects, effective primary and secondary education, sustaining and rebuilding tribal culture and traditions, and access to health or other social services in their communities. Prior to the tribal colleges, education in Indian Country was primarily composed of schools focusing on an "assimilation" curriculum that attempted to take the Native out of the American Indian. The tribal colleges' approach of valuing Indian culture and lifestyles as an asset instead of a hindrance was a marked departure. For years, the colleges struggled for existence in abandoned buildings and ad hoc campuses in order to provide quality education for American Indian students who, as a group, traditionally exhibited some of the lowest educational achievements of all racial/ethnic groups.

In 1989, the nation's tribal colleges founded the American Indian College Fund (Fund) to raise desperately needed scholarship, endowment and operating monies. The Fund's support for the colleges comes in the form of scholarships (more than 6,000 scholarships totaling approximately $4 million were distributed in 2002), capital dollars and endowments for colleges to develop facilities, and funding for tribal college programs in teacher training and cultural preservation. As the 20th century became the 21st century, the Fund also embarked on Campaign Sii Ha Sin, a multi-million-dollar campaign to raise funds for much-needed facilities improvements at the tribal colleges. The campaign provided the financial wherewithal to renew, revitalize and rebuild the nation's tribal campuses to reflect the worth of the education they provide.

This report summarizes the results of research conducted on behalf of the Fund by Harder+Company Community Research. The purpose of the research was to build upon past work to document the impact of tribal colleges on those who attend them and the impact of the recent Campaign Sii Ha Sin. Thus, the report is split into two distinct sections: Section I: Cultivating Success, outlines the main findings from a national survey of American Indian College Fund tribal college graduates and compares the results to other studies, and Section II: A Tale of Six Colleges, outlines the impact of Campaign Sii Ha Sin on six of the 32 colleges that benefited from the campaign.

The key findings from the survey of American Indian College Fund tribal college graduates are:

- Survey respondents were even more "at-risk" of leaving higher education without a degree or certificate than most Indian students – the racial/ethnic group already facing more barriers to education than any other – but they succeeded in obtaining their tribal college degrees. Further analysis suggested the Fund's scholarship played a critical role in their success.
- Tribal colleges utilize an assets-based model of education, building upon the strengths of American Indian culture. They value the role of family and community in Indian students' lives, provide flexible support for students who must leave for familial or tribal obligations, and offer personal and cultural growth courses through an explicitly American Indian-oriented curriculum and environment.
- Geographic proximity, for many survey respondents, was a key factor in their decision to attend a tribal college. Due to family and tribal responsibilities and loyalties, some respondents may not have achieved their degree without the nearby presence of a tribal college.
- Many survey respondents graduated from their tribal college with a strong sense of their American Indian heritage, and graduates sought further education not only to benefit themselves and their immediate family, but also to develop ways to give back to their tribes and the larger Indian community.
- Scholarships from the American Indian College Fund provide a crucial resource for traditional and non-traditional Indian students pursing post-secondary degrees. Many survey respondents indicated their education would not be possible without these scholarships.

Facilities are key to the educational and institutional success of tribal colleges. For decades, many tribal colleges did not receive adequate funding to effectively support the Native and non-Native students who attend them. Campaign Sii Ha Sin provided unprecedented funds for tribal colleges to improve their facilities and better support their students. The key findings from the Campaign Sii Ha Sin site visits are as follows:

- Improved facilities make a marked difference in the success of the tribal colleges. Prior to the Fund's Campaign Sii Ha Sin, many campuses operated from dilapidated campuses that were frequently composed of abandoned buildings or temporary structures. With improved facilities, most colleges experienced increased enrollment and admission of younger students.
- The expansion of the student base has also been a challenge for colleges, as many have already filled the spaces they built. Because of the new comfortable, appealing surroundings, the colleges are also increasingly attracting non-Native students, for which they receive no federal support.
- The improved colleges are a central meeting place for the surrounding community. The expansion and careful construction of buildings that reflect the Indian values of the community provide a venue for cross-generational and cross-cultural interaction. As one of the few facilities of size in rural areas, these spaces also provide a positive, safe environment for community gatherings, arts and humanities programs, and even exercise.
- The tribal colleges were good stewards of Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds. Every college successfully expanded, improved or renewed its campus. Evidence of this is the fact that new federal, state and private funders have funded other construction projects on all visited campuses to continue the expansion and improvement of facilities.
- Despite the improved facilities, the demand for education is quickly exceeding the available facilities. Continued funding will be critical to ensure the continued success of these organizations.

What follows are the highlights of the survey and the case studies of six of the tribal colleges. The results of these research activities exhibit the critical role these institutions continue to play in Indian Country and the continued need for financial support of their important endeavors.

# Introduction

American Indian students face multiple barriers to success in higher education. The current Indian adult population has one of the lowest levels of educational attainment of any group in the nation. In 1999, less than 12 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native[1] adults held a bachelor's degree or higher, and one in three had not received any degree[2] beyond a high school diploma or its equivalent (Census 2000). Yet, compared with the level of educational success of past generations, a trend has emerged: both enrollment and completion rates for American Indians in post-secondary education have increased dramatically during the last three decades. The establishment of the tribal colleges and universities (TCUs)[3] during this period is arguably a decisive factor in the growing number of American Indians who access and succeed in higher education (Woodcock et al 2001).

This study examines the educational experiences of American Indian students who received scholarships from the American Indian College Fund to support their studies at tribal colleges.[4] As a group, these scholarship recipients were generally non-traditional students, and thus faced numerous challenges to successfully completing a degree, as well as inheriting a legacy of assimilation-focused educational policy that poses a barrier particular to Native students. Nonetheless, they succeeded in their pursuit of a post-secondary degree, graduating in 2001 or 2002. Given the vastly lower completion rates for American Indian college students at "mainstream" (non-tribal) institutions (up to 96 percent of Native students leave mainstream education without a degree, while 86 percent of tribal college students complete their study program) (W.K. Kellogg b, n.d.), it is evident that these unique institutions are far more successful at meeting the needs of American Indians in higher education than non-tribal institutions. This study provides a profile of Indian students while pursuing a post-secondary degree and after graduation, the obstacles and resources they encounter as college students, and the unique role of tribal colleges and the American Indian College Fund in their success.

1 Throughout this report, "American Indian" also denotes Alaska Natives.

2 The term "degree" is used in this report to refer to all post-secondary degrees and certificates.

3 The terms "Tribal Colleges" and "Tribal Colleges and Universities" are used interchangeably throughout this report.

4 Respondents to the 2002 survey are generally referred to as "American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates" throughout this report.

# Methodology

## Survey Design and Administration

The American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey was created collaboratively by Harder+Company Community Research and American Indian College Fund (Fund) staff members, and asked questions about the graduates' educational experiences at both tribal colleges and non-tribal institutions, the impact of receiving an American Indian College Fund scholarship, and their personal and professional experiences after graduation. Harder+Company identified potential survey respondents by matching the names of students who had graduated from tribal colleges in 2001 or 2002 to the Fund's database of scholarship recipients. The Fund requested assistance from the tribal colleges to locate these graduates.

The study utilized a modified Tailored Design Method (TDM), which consisted of multiple mailings and reminders to maximize survey response (Dillman 2000). During the fall of 2002, the survey was mailed to 862 graduates with an incentive of a $2 bill and the chance to win a Pendleton blanket designed for the Fund by American Indian artists. Of the initial survey mailings, 733 were successfully delivered (the remainder were returned as undeliverable). Three weeks after the initial mailing, a reminder postcard was sent to graduates who had not responded, followed by a second copy of the survey after six weeks. A total of 366 unduplicated responses from graduates of 30 TCUs were returned to Harder+Company for analysis, resulting in an overall response rate of 49.9 percent. This exceeded the expected response rate, as mail surveys generally have high nonresponse rates, and previous mail surveys to tribal college graduates have generated response rates of 27-28 percent (James 2001, AIHEC 2000).

## Limitations of the Survey Data

Because individuals who receive a mail survey self-select in order to participate, there is a potential for response bias in the sample. For example, individuals who were employed at the time, or who had attained a higher level of degree from their college, may have been more inclined to respond. Additionally, graduates of the colleges that were able to provide updated contact information could potentially be over-represented. Finally, as in any self-administered survey, respondents may be more likely to interpret questions differently or leave some answers blank than in-person survey techniques. The research team rigorously cleaned the data to remove errors and, throughout the report, valid percentages are used to avoid misrepresentation of the data.

## Analysis

Survey findings are considered in relation to available data and existing research perspectives on the experiences and characteristics of American Indian post-secondary students in both tribal and non-tribal college settings. However, existing data on American Indian students is limited, and in many cases national databases do not allow for comparison. While also limited in breadth and scope, the growing body of research on the tribal colleges and universities was used as well to provide further context for the analysis.

Although tribal colleges serve both Indian and non-Indian students in their community, the 2002 American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey respondents were predominantly American Indian (95.8%). This reflects the percentage of American Indian College Fund scholarship recipients who are also Indian.[5] Therefore, the survey population was compared to secondary data specific to American Indian undergraduates only when possible. Additional comparisons were made to the students and graduates of two-year public community colleges, as these correspond most closely to the tribal colleges in their missions and student populations.

The analysis focuses on the unique impact of education at a tribal college, with the support of an American Indian College Fund scholarship, on American Indian students, their families and communities.

5 In the Fall of 2002, 97.5% of American Indian College Fund scholarships were awarded to American Indians (or 2,321 of 2,379).

# Historical Context and the Emergence of Tribal Colleges and Universities

## A Legacy of Assimilation-Focused Education

Since the time that settlers first sought to enroll American Indians in their schools, Native education policy in the United States has primarily been characterized by attempts to assimilate students into a "mainstream American culture," without regard for the educational needs and cultural integrity of either the student or the American Indian community. It was not until federal termination policies were abandoned, shifting to the era of self-determination in the 1960s, that government policy acknowledged that in "schools which fail to recognize the importance and validity of the Indian community … the community and child retaliate by treating the school as an alien institution" (United States Senate 1969).

Tribal leaders had already come to see higher education for American Indians as a crucial yet sorely lacking asset for negotiating the changing policy context and revitalizing Indian communities, yet the attrition rates of American Indian students who enrolled in "mainstream" colleges and universities increasingly demonstrated that this education did not flourish in these institutions, far from the home community (Boyer 1997). The tools of self-determination, therefore, first required self-education in the form of tribal colleges and universities.

## Advance of the Tribal Colleges and Educational Attainment for American Indian Students

Since the Navajo Community College (now Diné College) opened its doors in 1968, 34 member tribal colleges have been established, offering Native students access to academically rigorous and accredited programs rooted in a culturally relevant curriculum. Connections to the tribal community, traditions and worldview are no longer disconnected from academic aspiration, and the colleges foster "leadership development for positive social change in Native communities [as well as] scholarships that promote pride, social consciousness, and indigenous thought" (W.K. Kellogg 2002).

Enrollment at the tribally controlled colleges has more than doubled in the last decade, to some 27,000 students, and continues to grow. The colleges practice an open-door policy, serving the educational needs of all community members, regardless of race or ethnicity; during the 1999-2000 academic year, non-Native students accounted for 16.6 percent of the student body (NCES IPEDS 1999).

American Indian student enrollments have also greatly increased at non-tribal institutions (though not quite as rapidly) during this period, yet Native completion rates in mainstream higher education are dramatically lower than at tribal colleges. American Indian students are often reluctant to pursue higher education if they must leave their home community, and for those that do enroll in non-tribal institutions without previously attending a tribal college, the vast majority (up to 96%) do not complete their degree (W.K. Kellogg b, n.d.). This attrition rate also was apparent among

American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey respondents. Slightly more than 40 percent (41.5%) of survey respondents attended another institution prior to enrolling in a tribally controlled college or university, yet 70 percent of these left before attaining their degree goal.

In contrast, 86 percent of tribal college students complete their program, most frequently receiving an associate's degree, and almost half then go on to mainstream colleges and universities (W.K. Kellogg b, n.d.). Attendance at tribal colleges also frequently mitigates the challenges faced by American Indians in higher education at any institution; after even one year of TCU enrollment, Indian students complete non-tribal degree programs at four times the rate of Native students who have never attended a tribal college (Boyer 1989). Results from the American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey support these findings, as respondents who attended a non-tribal institution at any time (prior, concurrent or after tribal college) had a lower attrition rate (50%) than those who attended another institution prior to their TCU experience.[6]

6 Note: the attrition rate for survey respondents pursuing further education after TCU attendance is almost certainly even lower; due to survey data limitations, the attrition rate of students prior to attending a tribal college could not be extracted from this figure.

# What Challenges do American Indian Students Face at Non-Tribal Institutions?

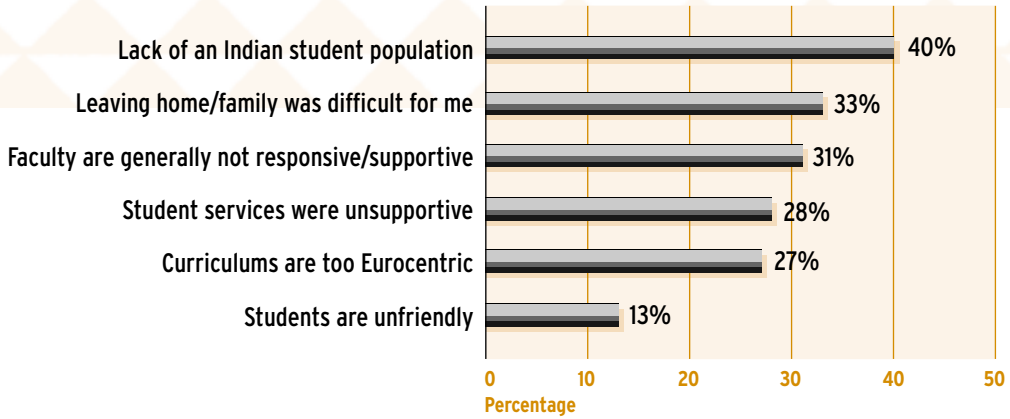
*"I was scared, lonely, had two kids [and was] far from my people."*

–Tribal College Graduate Survey respondent

In 1990 and 1991, while tribal college enrollment and American Indian degree attainment were noticeably increasing, the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force (INAR) held hearings throughout the nation and Indian Country to gather testimony for the U.S. Secretary of Education. Findings from the hearings noted that "unsupportive institutional climates, inadequate academic preparation, insufficient financial support, few Indian role models, and unaddressed cultural influences on student adjustment [are] major causes for Indian student disenfranchisement" (U.S. Department of Education 1991). Further studies in this area have similarly found that American Indian students, particularly those from rural reservation communities, face isolation and alienation at "mainstream" institutions (Wright 1990, Boyer 1997). Indeed, Perry's 2002 study of ethno-violence against American Indians in the university setting noted that, "While cases of violent assaults are rare, daily harassment and verbal assaults are relatively common." Furthermore, mainstream Western pedagogy "contradicts [American Indian students'] cultural values and behaviors" (Aragon 2002), and is structured in stark contrast to the holistic, integrative, and reciprocal learning approach generally held by American Indians.[7]

Most American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey respondents who attended non-tribal colleges experienced more than one difficulty. Financial constraints – including the high cost of tuition (70%), the cost of living off campus (45%), and the cost of moving to a far-away town (39%) – were among the most common.[8]

**Figure 1**
**Difficulties at Non-Tribal Colleges (except financial)**




Source: 2002 American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey

The non-financial challenges these students encountered at non-tribal institutions echo the issues related to unsupportive learning environments and culture shock noted above (Figure 1). Additional reported difficulties primarily conveyed a perception of anonymity and hostility in the environment, such as: "The atmosphere was too hostile;" "I was all alone, unable to fit in;" "racial comments about Native Americans;" "you were a number, not a name" and; "(you) can't move rez kids into city life."

7 An exception to these experiences has been seen at mainstream institutions that have established an American Indian Studies program or department, which generally provide a range of support services in addition to culturally relevant curricula (Wright 1990).

8 For more information on financing the cost of mainstream education, see the section on educational experiences after tribal college below.

# Common Barriers to American Indian Success in Higher Education: American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates in Context

The tribal college environment offers American Indian students the opportunity to pursue their educational goals without confronting the cultural challenges particular to "mainstream" higher education. Nevertheless, Indian students face a number of barriers to degree attainment regardless of the institutional setting. A high proportion of all American Indian students, particularly those at tribal colleges, are non-traditional students (James 2001, AIHEC 2003, Brown 2003, Boyer 1995).

Non-traditional status refers to students who do not fit the "traditional" student profile: a high school graduate who enrolls full-time in college immediately after high school graduation, with financial support provided primarily or completely by their parents. Non-traditional students are older when they enroll, may have dependents or children of their own, be single parents, and be already active in the workforce. These characteristics have been linked to an increased likelihood of leaving higher education without obtaining a degree, and are considered to be "risk factors."[9] The more risk factors a student has, the less likely it is that she or he will complete her or his studies (Horn 1996, NCES 2001). Non-traditional students' competing priorities and limited free time for studying can affect both academic performance and perseverance in the long-term: "Many lead complex lives, juggling school, work and family responsibilities as they pursue their degree" (Choy 2002, 10). Even at four-year colleges, the percentage of non-traditional undergraduates is increasing nationwide: only 40 percent of today's undergraduates at these institutions would be considered completely traditional (Choy 2002, NCES 2000).

9 Persistence risk factors, or characteristics that make it more difficult for students to complete college, are well defined in the educational literature (Choy 2002, Horn 1998) and are generally believed to be cross-cultural.

**Table 1:**
**Characteristics of American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates**

| | Percent* |
|---|---|
| **Age at TCU entry** | |
| 18 or younger | 18% |
| 19 to 23 | 30% |
| 24 to 29 | 15% |
| 30 to 39 | 21% |
| 40 and older | 13% |
| **Work Intensity** | |
| Part-time | 27% |
| Full-time | 22% |
| None | 51% |
| **Secondary Completion** | |
| High School Diploma | 80% |
| GED | 20% |
| **Single Parenthood** | |
| Single parent | 37% |
| Not a single parent | 62% |
| **Number of dependents** | |
| 1 to 2 | 52% |
| 3 to 4 | 35% |
| 5 or more | 13% |
| **Dependents supported** | |
| Own children | 82% |
| Spouse/partner | 42% |
| Parent | 15% |
| Sibling | 15% |
| Grandparents | 2% |
| Other/Extended Family | 11% |

*Excludes missing responses. Details may not add to 100% due to rounding.
SOURCE: 2002 American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey

However, the relative number of non-traditional students enrolled by tribal colleges (as at most community colleges) is higher than average. In this respect, the tribal college graduates appear to be generally representative of the overall student body at tribal colleges and universities. Survey respondents exhibited high rates of financial independence, single parenthood, financial responsibility for others while enrolled, possession of a GED rather than a high-school diploma, and most of the other attributes of non-traditional students (Table 1).[10]

In addition to non-traditional status, the profile of survey respondents includes further traits that predict leaving higher education before completion. Nearly 40 percent (38.5%) were the first person in their immediate family to attain a degree. While this is a significant achievement for the student and the family as a whole, first generation students are more likely than those who have a college-educated parent to leave the college before their second year (Choy 2002).

Furthermore, many of the American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates Survey respondents who were financially responsible for others during the time that they pursued their degree supported more than one person. On average, graduates supported three people, (the maximum number of dependents being 12 persons), including foster or stepchildren, grandparents, uncles, nieces and other extended family members. Finally, the National Center for Education Statistics' estimates of student persistence rates through a longitudinal study suggest that students who enroll for the first time at community colleges (public two-year) are the least likely to attain a degree; nearly half were not enrolled and had not received a degree at the six-year follow-up (NCES 2001).[11] That is, national trends indicate that beginning at a two-year community college implies a decreased likelihood of degree completion. However, our study suggests that attendance at tribal colleges in particular (most of which are considered public two-year) increases the likelihood of educational success and degree completion.

Among the entire student body at all post-secondary institutions (public and private, two- and four-year), American Indian undergraduates have the highest proportion of non-traditional students of any racial or ethnic group (NCES NPSAS 2000). It is therefore remarkable that respondents to the 2002 American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey had higher risk factor rates than the general American Indian undergraduate population (Figure 2). In other words, survey respondents were even more "at-risk" of leaving higher education without a degree than Native students overall, the racial/ethnic group already facing more barriers to education than any other.

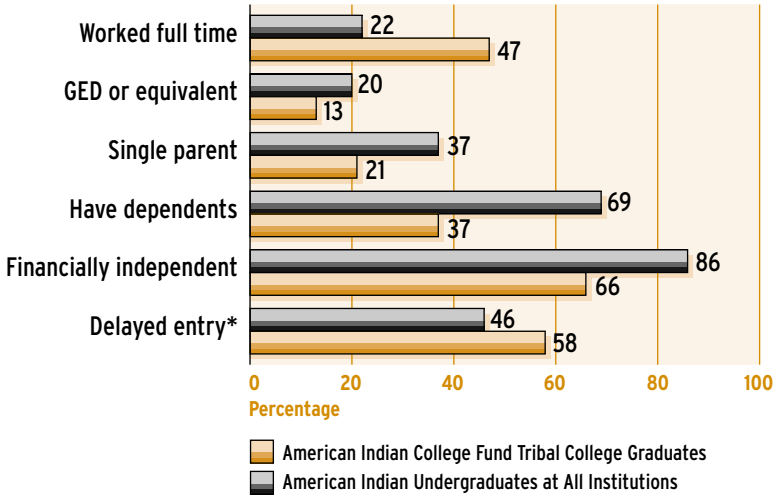
10 Previous research has found similar conclusions regarding the profile of tribal college students, including: generally "non-traditional" students; 60 to 69% supporting at least one dependent; 44% first-generation students, and; higher than average rates of GED or equivalency as opposed to regular high school diplomas (Boyer 1995 and 1997, AIHEC 2000, James 2001). One notable distinction, however, is that the American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates were younger than the populations found in prior studies, with a median age of 24 and an average age of 27 (compared to median ages ranging from 27 to 34).

11 Nationally, 53% of all American Indian students enroll for the first time at a community college (BPS 01). However, one distinguishing factor to consider is that 40% of survey respondents had previously attended college and so would not be considered members of the "beginners" population referred to by this attrition rate.

Interestingly, tribal college graduates exhibited lower rates of two non-traditional characteristics than the overall Native undergraduate population: full-time work while enrolled and delayed entry. Although the unemployment rate in TCU communities is generally much higher than the national average and limited employment opportunities for students may contribute to their lower levels of full-time work, American Indian College Fund scholarship support appears to allow recipients to choose to prioritize school over work. Indeed, many scholarship recipients explained that the American Indian College Fund support they received allowed them to reduce their work hours and focus more on their academics. As one graduate explained, "Scholarship monies enabled me to significantly reduce my work hours. This allowed more study time, not to mention less stress, which helped me achieve high marks." As for the higher proportion of younger students, the survey findings appear to support Boyer's 1997 conclusion that as the colleges gain increased recognition as legitimate institutions, they are receiving a "second wave" of younger students enrolling in TCUs as a "first choice—not just last chance" college (Boyer 1997, 36).

Why, then, did these tribal college students succeed in higher education, when they appeared least likely to persist? The answer to this question may be that an American Indian who studies at a tribal college and has the support of an American Indian College Fund scholarship is, in fact, participating in a very different educational experience than the general population of students who enroll at mainstream institutions. Moreover, the traits that are considered "risk factors" for the general population should be reconsidered from the perspective of the American Indian community. The unique nature of tribal college education and the importance of Fund support are explored in the following section of this report.

**Figure 2**
**Non-Traditional "Risk Factors": Respondents Compared to all Native Undergraduates (nationally)**




*NOTE: Enrollment at age 22 or higher used as proxy indicator for American Indian College Fund respondents

Source: 2002 American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey; U.S Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, NPSAS: 2000

# Tribal Colleges: A Unique Educational Experience

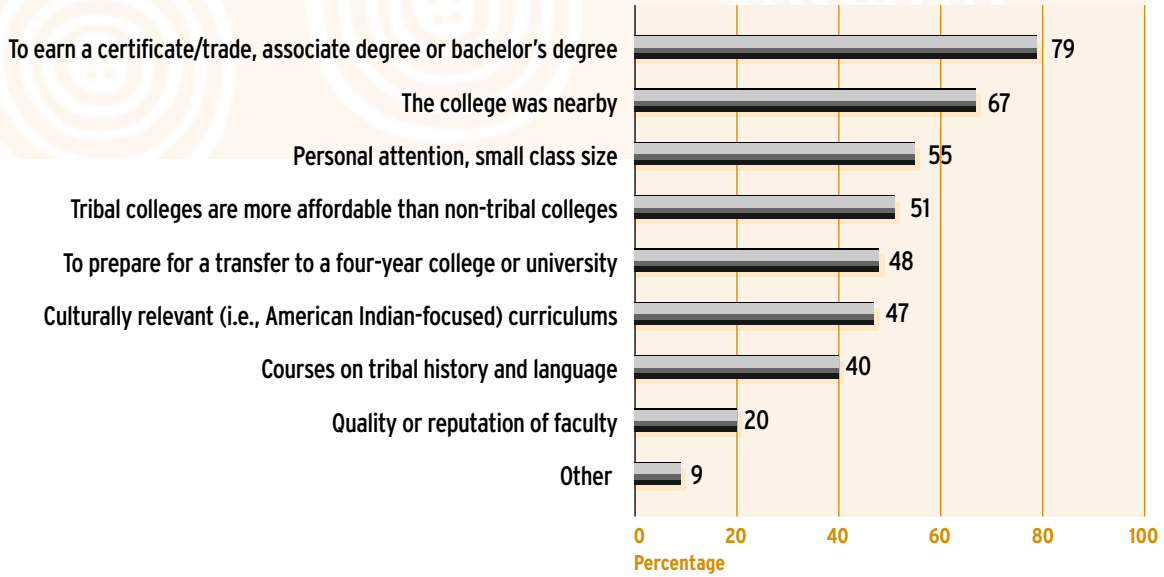
*"The unique benefits of attending tribal colleges include the convenience of being able to remain close to home and family, the cultural components of the tribal college curriculum, and a strong sense of community"*

(Brown 2003)

In contrast to the experiences of American Indians enrolled at non-tribal institutions, tribal colleges provide an environment that addresses their needs, particularly the barriers to education that many face as non-traditional students. Though the educational systems at all community colleges are generally geared towards these students, Native students fare better at tribal colleges than all non-tribal institutions, including other community colleges.

If the results of this study can be assumed to be representative of the experience of American Indians at tribal colleges overall, the distinction may lie in the colleges' emphasis on cultural identity and knowledge, and the strong connection to the community. Tribal colleges are intimately and actively engaged in their communities and offer a curriculum and approach to learning that integrates tribal culture and traditions into all aspects of scholarship. In fact, the accessibility of the college to the graduates home community, personal attention and culturally relevant curriculum were among the most-cited reasons that American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates Survey respondents offered for their decision to enroll (Figure 3).

**Figure 3:**
**Reasons for Attending a Tribal College**




"Other" reasons included: Accommodating to working while in school, especially for single parents; campus set-up; more comfortable, due to culture or friendly/"family" atmosphere; particular curriculum offered such as jewelry making or museum studies; to meet and/or study with more relatives or other American Indians; broader goals such as helping the tribe; received scholarship or fellowship.

Source: 2002 American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey

Based on the Tribal College Graduate Survey findings, tribal colleges offer three key elements in higher education that encourage degree attainment for American Indian students: they link to and build upon the strengths of the student, their family and the surrounding community; allow and support students' temporary leave; and provide a unique curriculum and environment that supports American Indian identity and development.

## Link to Family and Community

*"I feel that one impact the tribal college experience had on me was being able to work, attend classes with community members and share thoughts, ideas and beliefs about our Indian culture, and not having to uproot my family and to leave the reservation."*

- Tribal College Graduate Survey respondent

For older students of any race or ethnicity, especially those with dependents, the accessibility of local colleges is often a key factor in their choice of institution. This concern often leads them to the doors of a local community college. Previous studies have similarly found that most tribal college students attend a college close to their home community, usually within 50 miles (James 2001, AIHEC 2000, Boyer 1995). Likewise, the American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates Survey respondents lived relatively close to their tribal college: nearly 90 percent lived within 50 miles of the colleges, with more than half commuting 10 miles or less to classes. Geographic accessibility was, in fact, a significant factor in respondent decision to enroll for more than two-thirds of graduates (see Figure 3). Given that much of the American Indian population resides in isolated, rural areas, this may indicate that the very existence of tribal colleges near the communities they serve is a key factor in encouraging Native scholarship (24 of the 34 TCUs are located in rural areas, and only one is in a large city).

Despite the proximity of tribal colleges to most of their student bodies, there is a lack of public transportation for student commuters. By far, the most common method of transportation that survey respondents used to attend classes was the student's own car, followed by carpooling and walking. Although 67 percent relied on only one means of transportation, just over 20 percent commuted by two methods, and some graduates reported using up to five ways of getting to their college, a finding which illustrates the barriers to accessing even local tribal colleges and the dedication of the students themselves. During the case study visits, the research team spoke with a tribal college student who hitchhiked 100 miles each way to attend classes. For many tribal scholars dependent on transportation by car, the added cost of gasoline can be a significant impact on personal or family resources already stretched thin on a student's reduced income. It is not surprising therefore, that more than half (55%) of survey respondents used part of their Fund scholarship for transportation, and for some, this support was crucial for completing their degree:

**Table 2:**
**College Accessibility for American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates**

| | Percent£ |
|---|---|
| **Distance from Home** | |
| 2 miles or less | 28% |
| 3 to 10 miles | 27% |
| 11 to 50 miles | 36% |
| 51 to 90 miles | 5% |
| More than 90 miles | 5% |
| **Commute Method** | |
| Own car | 75% |
| Carpool/ride with a friend* | 23% |
| Walk/on foot** | 18% |
| Borrowed car | 15% |
| Hitch hike | 7% |
| Bus system | 6% |
| Bike/Other | 1% |

*Includes students who were driven by family members

**Includes students who lived on campus

£ Excludes missing responses

SOURCE: 2002 American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey

*"As for me, it saved my life. Without this scholarship, I would not have been financially able to fix my car. Without my car, I could never have been able to get to college to finish. You would not believe how thankful I am to have received it."*

- Tribal College Graduate Survey respondent

Many of these respondents also specified that the opportunity to remain close to their family was a reason for enrolling at their tribal college. As one graduate explained, "The tribal college has had the greatest impact on my life by allowing me to attend college without leaving home, while raising a family." As previously discussed, most tribal college attendees have families for whom they care. (Nearly 70 percent (69.4%) were supporting at least one other person at the time they attended college, and of these, nearly half (48%) supported three or more persons (see Table 1). The importance and support of family was also apparent in the high percentage of respondents who attended tribal colleges with another member of their family. More than 40 percent attended their tribal college concurrently with another member of their family, most commonly a sibling and/or an extended family member.

As the importance of family, tribal and community ties in American Indian culture poses a barrier to leaving the home community to pursue a post-secondary degree, the presence of a local tribal college eliminates the difficult choice between pursuing higher education and residing within the family, community and tribal circles.

## Temporary Leave

At the same time that commitment to family was an important reason survey respondents pursued their education at a local tribal college, family obligations also contribute to the "financial burden on students, especially the ones that have to juggle family, school and household responsibilities" (2002 Tribal College Graduates Survey respondent). Family responsibilities, lack of financial support and employment (often needed to provide for family needs) are principal reasons for "stopping out," or skipping semesters among tribal college students. Indeed, a recent study found that American Indian students stop out of college more frequently than their counterparts at non-tribal community colleges (Red Leaf 1999). Confirming this assessment, one-third (33%) of the American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates stopped out of tribal college at some point, and family and tribal obligations was the most-reported reason (Table 3).

While the larger educational community often views stopping out of college as an indicator of student disengagement from their education, tribal colleges do not place that stigma on temporary leaves. In fact, tribal colleges frequently see stopping out as a commitment to family and consider this a valuable trait in their student body. In contrast to viewing students with family as being "at-risk," tribal colleges often see these students as potential role models. For example, in research conducted at four reservation-based tribal colleges in Montana, college staff members were found to perceive students whose family obligations were serious enough to interfere with their studies as responsible members of their community (HeavyRunner cited in Mainor 2001).

In the tribal college environment, students find support and understanding for the importance of family: not only is future re-enrollment accessible,[12] but the colleges' validation of the value of family encourages pursuit of higher education among other family members. Many colleges are now

12 two-thirds (64%) of survey respondents who had stopped out had done so only once; and 69 percent reported that the average time before they returned was less than one year.

**Table 3:**
**American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates Who Stopped out of Tribal College (n=119)**

| | Percent* |
|---|---|
| **Reason for temporary Leave** | |
| Family/tribal obligations | 51.7% |
| Financial | 34.5% |
| Transferred to a different college or university | 9.5% |
| Only took courses for interest, not for a degree | 8.6% |
| Poor grades | 8.6% |
| Quality of teaching was not what I wanted | 4.3% |
| Faculty I needed to pursue my interests was not present | 3.4% |
| Degree desired was not offered | 2.6% |
| Inadequate or poor facilities (e.g., dorms, classrooms) | 2.6% |
| Other | 41.2% |

Family and tribal obligations included: death and illness in the family; general family problems; lack of day care or the need to care for one's children and; the birth of a new child.

Other reasons for leaving one's studies at a tribal college included: conflict with work schedules/work took precedence over school; health reasons and; relocation away from the tribal college campus.

*Excludes missing responses

SOURCE: 2002 American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey

providing childcare on campus (often involving tribal elders) and family-centered models of including the family in a student's education. Over half (57%) of survey respondents reported that another member of their family was attending or planning to attend a tribal colleges as a result of their general tribal college experience. As one respondent explained, "The university was understanding when my son went to class with me; now my son wants to go to college. I feel that he sees college life as a step in life that needs to be taken."

Nevertheless, increased financial support for tribal college students can undeniably lessen the pressures of family needs. As previously noted, American Indian College Fund scholarships allowed survey respondents to lower their work hours to accommodate school, and for some this support determined whether they could remain enrolled: "Without the Fund, I personally would have dropped out to seek employment and to support my family… [the scholarship] helped me continue my education even at the hardest times."

Family and community connections are also reciprocal as tribal college students benefit from the encouragement and emotional and practical support of their community when coping with the stresses of school. Educators at the colleges have witnessed the strength of these social support networks, "such as the grandmother who won't let her granddaughter quit school, driving the student to college and taking care of the great grandchild each day" (Ambler 2003). Additionally, the reservation-based Montana study found that 35 percent of students said they coped with stress by speaking to a religious leader, counselor or elder. Considered from this perspective, the characteristics that place American Indian students in the "at-risk" category at a non-tribal institution may instead be factors in their success in the tribal college setting.

## Tribal College Curriculum and Environment

*"The curriculum is geared to a tribal mind with tribal perspective that we can relate to and, in turn, gives the understanding and the tools I need to provide a better future for my child and my unborn children."*

– Tribal College Graduate Survey respondent

The commitment of tribal colleges and universities to integrating American Indian culture into all aspects of curriculum and activities is perhaps the most unique facet of these institutions. Formal instruction on tribal history, knowledge and languages both strengthens the self-image and resilience of the students who attend and contributes to broader cultural renewal and development of Indian societies (Boyer 1997, AIHEC 2001). Research has demonstrated that "students who are strongly rooted in their culture and their past are best able to succeed" (NCAI 2000). American Indian culture is manifested even in the physical infrastructure of the campus. For example, newer facilities reflect Native design sensibilities, class placards are frequently in tribal languages and every college now has a cultural resource center.[13] Pursuit of higher education in a community of Native peers and with a high degree of personal attention from educators is an experience that cannot be had at most non-tribal institutions. As a result of the local tribal colleges, tribal communities "now enjoy unprecedented opportunities to incorporate useful aspects of the dominant society's style of education with our own time-honored purposes and ways of educating" (ANON 1999).

Although some students focus specifically on American Indian studies, the majority concentrate in other areas, yet still benefit from the central role of tribal culture and thought in the educational environment. Respondents

**Table 4:**
**Field of Study at Tribal College**

| Field Of Study | Percent* |
|---|---|
| Business/Management | 17% |
| Teaching/Education | 15% |
| General Studies | 13% |
| Computer/Information Science | 13% |
| Social/Behavioral Sciences | 7% |
| American Indian Studies | 7% |
| Vocational/Technical | 6% |
| Health | 6% |
| Arts and Humanities | 5% |
| Office/Administrative | 5% |
| Life Sciences | 4% |
| Other | 3% |
| Total | 100% |

*Excludes missing responses

SOURCE: 2002 American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey

13 The construction of these cultural resource centers was made possible through funding of the American Indian College Fund and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC).

pursued studies in a variety of disciplines comparable to that available at mainstream colleges, ranging from criminal justice to jewelry programs, to natural resource management (Table 4). Notably, American Indian College Fund Survey respondents focused on teaching and education at nearly twice the rate seen nationally among all American Indian undergraduates (15.2% as compared to 7.7%), responding to the alarming lack of Indian teachers on reservations. As previously noted, the cultural and atmospheric aspects of tribal colleges were important factors in the decision to enroll for survey respondents (See Figure 3). As a result of their studies, a high percentage (92%) of the graduates felt that their tribal college experience "somewhat" to "very much" gave them a stronger connection to their tribe/American Indian community. A slightly lower yet still notable proportion (88%) reported that it was "somewhat" to "very much" their experience to have gained a better understanding of their American Indian heritage by attending a tribal college, and 88 percent of respondents agreed "somewhat" to "very much" that they had witnessed their tribal college revitalizing the community it serves. One graduate described this aspect of a tribal college education as follows: "The tribal college gave me history and culture of my tribe and made me more aware of who I am and [where I] came from."

Pride in learning their tribal language was also a common theme in the impacts of tribal college education reported by survey respondents. Native languages are considered a source of preserving identity for many in the tribal community, and the "loss of American Indian languages has recently accelerated to such an extent that the majority of those who speak them have become highly concerned." (Littlebear 2003).

Finally, respondents found particular value in the nature of the scholarly community at the tribal colleges. In describing their experiences, they emphasized the development of a community of peers and a social network that they expect to last a lifetime, as well as a great appreciation for the support of college educators:

*"The close, personal attention one receives at a tribal college gives a foundation for future pursuits. One can return to them (faculty) for sponsorship."*

*"There were times that I thought about dropping out of school, and the people (faculty and staff) encouraged me to continue my education. If it weren't for the support, I don't think I'd be in school today."*

During the case study visits, stories emerged of teachers personally picking students up from their homes for classes and providing in-home study sessions for those who lived far from campus.

# Experiences with American Indian College Fund Scholarships: Financing a Tribal College Education

*"The people attending tribal colleges are not just earning a degree—they earn self-respect. And self-respect cannot be taken away. It's expensive to attend college, but can a price be put on self-respect?"*

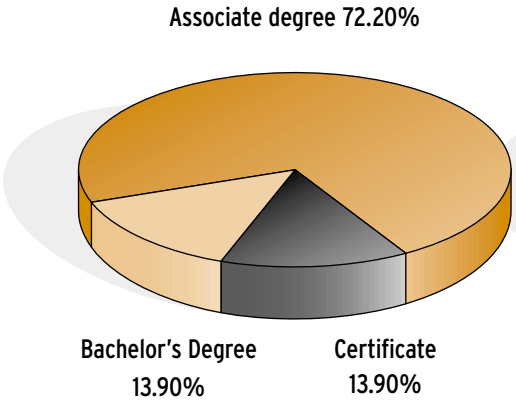
– Tribal College Graduate Survey Respondent

The support of an American Indian College Fund scholarship appears to have contributed substantially to the success of the American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates Survey respondents. Despite the relative affordability of tuition at tribal colleges in comparison to most four-year mainstream institutions, 87 percent of respondents had struggled "sometimes" to "always" to make financial ends meet while enrolled. Respondents generally used more than one source of support to finance their education (see Table 5), yet in open-ended responses regarding the impact of Fund support, the most common reply can be summarized by this student's comment: "Most who receive this scholarship would not be able to attend college without it." The vast majority (98%) reported that their Fund scholarship had been "somewhat" to "very important" in financing their education. The degree of importance of these scholarships is particularly striking given that the amount students receive is relatively modest by the standards of mainstream education.[14] One respondent specified, "without the $75 every two weeks, I would not have eaten."

Remarkably, American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates appear to have attained a higher proportion of bachelor's and associate degrees than Indian tribal college graduates do overall (Figures 4 and 5): only 6 percent of all American Indians graduating from tribal colleges in 1999 earned a bachelor's degree while 14 percent of survey respondents received degrees. This suggests that the Fund plays an important role in the continuing success of American Indians seeking degrees. In the absence of additional data (or a comparison group), two possible explanations can be considered as to why Fund scholarship recipients would attain higher degree levels than the overall Native TCU population. First, the financial support and encouragement provided by Fund scholarships may result in increased student perseverance and higher goal setting due to reduced work hours, lower stress levels and increased motivation to succeed. Second, it may be that the scholarships are provided to students who already exhibit (or are identified by student services as having) strong potential for educational success. Even if scholarship recipients show a high propensity for success, the scholarship undoubtedly reinforces these characteristics. For example, during site visits, the research team met with scholarship recipients and star students who were formerly underachievers. They uniformly attributed a portion of their success to the validation and confidence gained by receiving an American Indian College Fund scholarship.

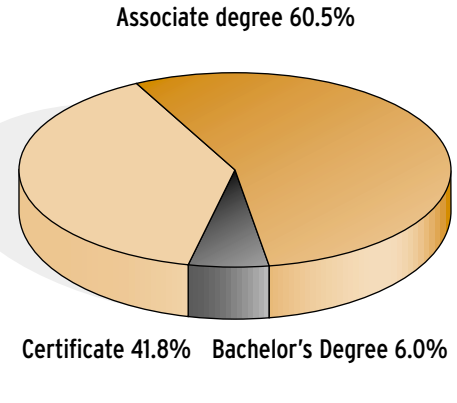
14 The average American Indian College Fund scholarship is nearly $600.

**Figure 4**
**Survey Respondent Degrees**




Source: 2002 American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey

**Figure 5**
**Total Degrees Awarded in 1999 by TCUs**




Source: U.S Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS: 1999

Prior to receiving a scholarship, less than half (44%) of the survey respondents were "somewhat" to "very familiar" with the Fund, with only 4 percent reporting that they were "very familiar" with the organization. The TCU financial aid office was the most-reported way that respondents had learned about the Fund (77%), and tribal college admissions offices also had contributed to awareness of the Fund for 21 percent of the scholarship recipients (Table 5). The tribal colleges and universities appear to have improved the visibility of the Fund in recent years. Although a survey of Fund scholarship recipients in 1999 found that nearly one-quarter of respondents were unaware that their scholarship originated from the American Indian College Fund (James 2001), by 2002, only 2 percent of the respondents in this study reported that they were unaware that the scholarship they received was provided by the Fund. However, the former survey included students who had graduated up to 10 years ago, which therefore may have impacted their recall of the source of their scholarship. When asked if they felt that their tribal college had provided adequate information about American Indian College Fund scholarships, 69 percent replied "Yes," 22 percent answered "No," and the remainder indicated that they did not know.

**Table 5:**
**Sources of Financial Support and Information on American Indian College Fund scholarships**

| Sources of Support | Percent* | How graduates learned of American Indian College Fund | Percent* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Other scholarships | 66% | College/university financial aid office | 77% |
| Other grants | 57% | Posters on campus | 39% |
| Jobs/employment | 49% | Peers | 26% |
| Support from tribe | 9% | College/university admission office | 21% |
| Support from parents or extended family | 14% | American Indian College Fund newsletter | 9% |
| Personal savings | 12% | American Indian College Fund website | 6% |
| Loans | 7% | Other | 12% |
| Other | 16% | | |

Primary other sources of support included: spouse; work study or work for the tribal college; federal support such as Pell grants or the GI Bill, and public assistance. In addition, a few graduates reported having sold beadwork, artwork, tacos, or donated plasma.

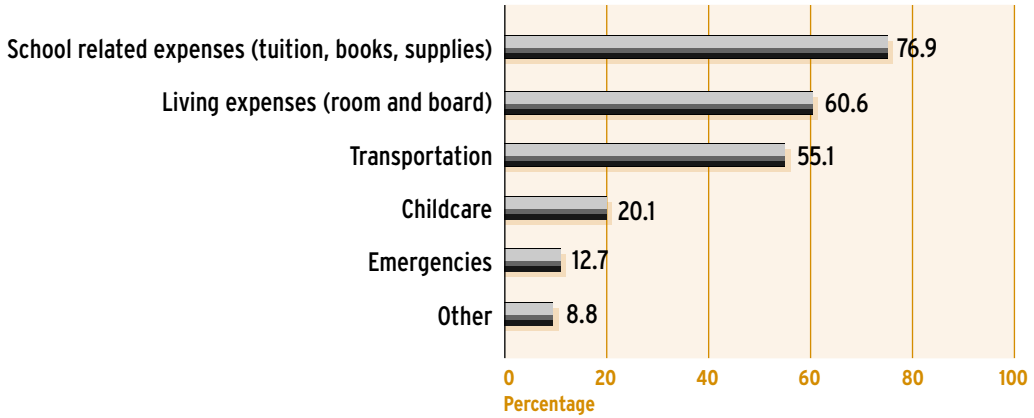
"Other" included: through family members; through an instructor or teacher and; from advertisements (television commercials, magazines, Indian newsletters, scholarship-related websites).

*Excludes missing responses

Source: 2002 American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey

While pursuing their studies, the survey respondents used their Fund scholarships to meet a wide range of needs. In addition to the uses indicated in Figure 6, graduates had applied these funds toward family and children's expenses, teacher certification testing, clothing and other personal items, car repairs and computer purchases. As one respondent explained, "Fund scholarships are important because they aid American Indian students in completing school and earning a degree, whether it be helping with child care expenses, tuition, books, transportation… the scholarships are needed." (For a more comprehensive view of the importance that Fund scholarship support had for the tribal college graduates, see the *Open Letter to Fund Donors from American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates Survey Respondents* at the end of Section 1 of this report.)

## Figure 6
**How Scholarships Were Used**




"Other" reasons included: Accommodating to working while in school, especially for single parents; campus set-up; more comfortable, due to culture or friendly/"family" atmosphere; particular curriculum offered such as jewelry making or museum studies; to meet and/or study with more relatives or other American Indians; broader goals such as helping the tribe; received scholarship or fellowship.

Source: 2002 American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey

# Life After Tribal College

*"The college gave me a stepping stone in life. Now my next step is a university."*

- Tribal College Graduate Survey Respondent

## Continued Pursuit of Education

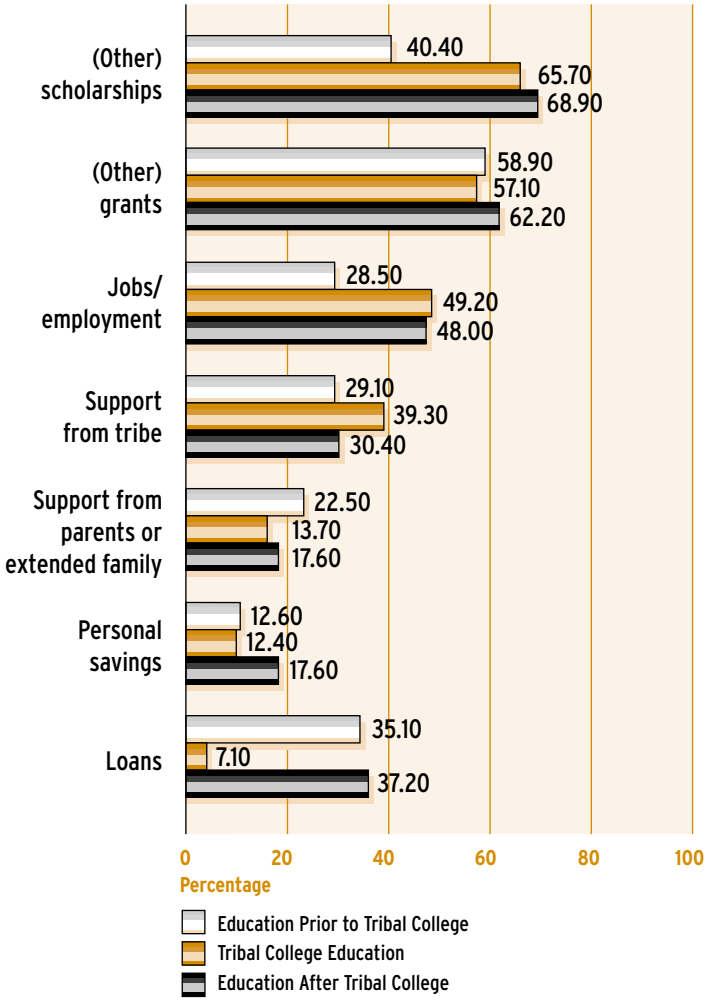
One of the goals of tribal colleges is to prepare American Indian students for success in transferring and persisting at mainstream institutions if their tribal college does not offer the level of degree or program area they wish to pursue. In this respect, the colleges appear to be achieving their goal: "Fewer than 10 percent of Native students who go directly from reservation high schools to mainstream colleges earn their degrees. But after attending a tribal college for just one year, Indian students are four times more likely to succeed when they transfer to a non-Indian institution" (Boyer 1989). The development of academic skills, increased self-confidence and a stronger sense of personal and tribal identity that tribal college graduates obtain during their studies prepare them for this transition.

Furthermore, the integration of Western mainstream educational approaches and positive shared learning experiences with non-Native students may support their ability to comfortably navigate non-tribal institutions. Bicultural students have shown greater success at persevering in non-tribal colleges and universities (Huffman 2001), drawing upon their ability to simultaneously "know, accept and practice both mainstream values and the traditional values and beliefs of their cultural heritage" (Garret 1996). The potential strength of biculturalism for American Indian students in non-tribal institutions, and by extension in the larger society, has made the tribal college a pivotal site, playing the dual roles of a tribally run institution and a cultural midwife. Tribal colleges are one of the few venues that are prepared to blend tribal and non-tribal values, which prepares Native students for success outside of their tribal college, reservation and/or community without compromising their Native identity. Regarding the challenge of negotiating both mainstream and tribal cultures, one survey respondent expressed, "I hope to build a bridge between both worlds through education."

Forty-three percent of the Tribal College Graduate Survey respondents pursued further education after they attained a tribal college degree, and there was a marked contrast in the level of degree they went on to pursue: while 73 percent of survey respondents had obtained an associate degree at their tribal college, 69 percent of those who went on to further education pursued a bachelor's degree. As only 10 tribally controlled institutions currently offer bachelor's degrees, many Indian students pursue these degrees at non-tribal institutions. However, given that nearly half (45%) of the survey respondents held more than one certificate or degree from a tribal college, the tribal college experience appears to encourage some students to return to tribal colleges rather than mainstream institutions to pursue additional educational goals.

Among respondents who had continued to pursue higher education at non-tribal institutions, 85 percent reported that their tribal college prepared them for transfer to another college or university "adequately" to "very well."

**Figure 7**
**Percent of Students Using Sources of Support for Higher Education**




"Other" reasons included: Accommodating to working while in school, especially for single parents; campus set-up; more comfortable, due to culture or friendly/"family" atmosphere; particular curriculum offered such as jewelry making or museum studies; to meet and/or study with more relatives or other American Indians; broader goals such as helping the tribe; received scholarship or fellowship.

Source: 2002 American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey

Interestingly, an examination of the information provided by respondents regarding how they had financed higher education prior, during and after their tribal college experience suggests that TCU attendance increased students' ability to procure financing for higher education (Figure 7). Although causality cannot be accurately determined, attending a tribal college appears to have increased these graduates' access to some forms of support for higher education. After their TCU education, students appear to have been better prepared to seek out and navigate the process of obtaining scholarships and grants; tribal college attendance and degree attainment may also have increased their competitive edge in obtaining these funds. Similarly, the tribal college experience may have prepared students for the rigors of working and studying at the same time and/or increased their ability to obtain employment.

Overall, survey respondents exhibited increased student self-sufficiency after attending tribal colleges and universities, relying more on self-support through work and personal savings and reduced support from family. Perhaps the most striking information that respondents shared is the dramatically lower reliance on loans while studying at tribal colleges than at mainstream institutions. While this may result in part from the lower cost of education at the colleges (and certainly indicates that tribal college students are less likely to graduate with heavy debt burdens), it should also be noted that TCUs receive far lower amounts of federal education loans than older land-grant institutions (see Case Study section).

# Professional and Personal Experiences

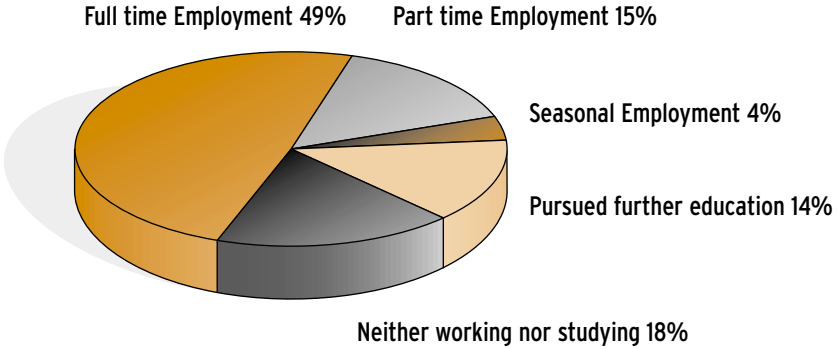
*"The Fund allowed me to go back to school and get my second degree, which enabled me to start my own business. I was a single parent, working two jobs, going to school full time, and now I have the means to support my kids, doing something I love."*

– Tribal College Graduate Survey respondent

The experience of attending a tribal college and attaining a degree or certificate had various impacts on the lives of American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey respondents. Professional advancement and increased salaries are the most common effects linked to completion of higher education, and survey respondents appeared to have benefited in this area from their education. However, additional impacts on the graduates and their communities arose from the singularly Native educational experience at tribal colleges and universities. Indeed, while an equally high proportion (92%) of respondents felt that their tribal college experience had "some" to "a lot" of positive impact on their personal and professional lives, a slightly higher proportion rated the positive impact on their personal lives as "a lot" than on their professional lives (54% compared to 47%).

At the time that tribal college graduates responded to the survey in the fall of 2002, 82 percent were either engaged in some form of employment or had enrolled at a university or college to continue their education (Figure 8). Given that respondents who graduated in 2002 had been out of school for less than six months at that time, we can assume that respondents' employment and/or enrollment status may not be representative of their eventual professional or educational activities.[15] This finding is particularly striking given high unemployment rates on reservations.

**Figure 8**
**Scholarship Recipient Activities After Tribal College**
**Fall 2002**




Source: 2002 American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey

15 Due to respondent anonymity, it was not possible to determine how many of the 18% that reported neither current employment nor pursuit of further education had graduated in 2002.

**Table 6:**
**Income Levels and Employers of Employed Graduates (n=254)**

| Employer | Percent* | Income Levels | Percent* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tribe | 40% | Under $6,000 | 14% |
| Private sector/for profit company | 14% | $6,000 to $ 9,999 | 8% |
| Federal government | 13% | $10,000 to $19,999 | 33% |
| Local or state government | 10% | $20,000 to $29,999 | 38% |
| Nonprofit | 9% | $30,000 to $39,999 | 6% |
| Self employed | 5% | $40,000 to $49,999 | 1% |
| City | 2% | $50,000 to $69,999 | 0.5% |
| Other | 20% | | |

Other employers included: tribal colleges, other universities, public school or school district, family business, hospital, and contract work.

*Excludes missing responses

Source: 2002 American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey

Among graduates who were employed, 61 percent reported that their current profession was in the field for which they had trained. The most common reasons that the remaining employed graduates cited for working in jobs unrelated to their field of study were not finding a job in their field, needing to find work of any sort in a tight job market, or having obtained a degree too general for employment in a specific field.

The majority of respondents were employed by the tribes, government agencies, nonprofits or educational institutions (Table 6), with only 14 percent working in the private sector. In this respect, the American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates Survey respondents are generally representative of TCU graduates in general, who are likely to be found providing services in support of their tribes and communities after graduation. “Today many students seek education in the helping professions so they can take the best of Western ways of helping back to their cultural communities without losing the best of their own traditions” (Weaver 2000).

An equal proportion (80%) of respondents agreed that it was "somewhat" to "very much" their experience that they were more involved in their tribal community as a result of getting their education through a tribal college, and that their tribal college education had trained them for a job that directly impacts the well-being of their tribe. As one graduate explained, "I'm making a positive impact on my reservation as an injury prevention specialist." Increased connection to tribe and community was, in fact, one of the more prominent themes that emerged from respondents' assessments of the impacts of tribal college attendance: " [Attending a tribal college] made me closer to my community and inspired me to give back to that community"… "It seems to have brought back a feeling of pride to the Native community"… "You think you were doing it for yourself; then when you start to work with your community, you [realize that you] did it for them, too."

In addition to a stronger connection to their tribe and community, respondents indicated three central levels on which they saw impacts resulting from their tribal college experience:

- **Increased confidence and self-esteem:** Many graduates reported a greater level of self-confidence, higher self-esteem and having developed the confidence and skills to take on leadership roles: "It improved my life and self-esteem more than I can say."… "This experience has instilled a sense of self-fulfillment in that it has made me proud to be Native American."
- **Professional development:** Survey respondents gained increased access to employment, professional skills and pride in their jobs and generally feel that as a result of the access to education provided by their tribal college and the Fund, they have seen personal economic advancement: "Without it, I probably wouldn't have the job I am presently in nor the wage I receive."
- **Benefits to families:** Respondents have seen positive changes for their families as a result of their education, both in terms of their quality of life and the encouragement to seek higher education for all family members: "I am a single mother and would not be where I am today if I had not gotten my education at the tribal college. I now own my own home and can provide my son with a good life."… "The college had a great impact on my life and the lives of my children. We all have a better outlook on education and the lives we want to live."

## Conclusion

Ultimately, the American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates Survey respondents are the authors of their own educational, professional and personal achievements. Graduates now encourage and support their own family and tribal members and put their skills at the service of their communities. Similarly, the work of the tribal colleges and universities and the American Indian College Fund over the past decades created the educational space in which American Indians pursue higher education and cultivate their own success.

# An Open Letter to Fund Donors from American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates Survey Respondents

The 2001-2002 graduates of tribal colleges who responded to this survey were asked what they would tell Fund donors about why these scholarships are important. The following letter is a compilation of what 31of the graduates would like to say, in their own words. Only minor changes to syntax were made to join together their messages to the donors and potential donors of the American Indian College Fund.

Dear Donor,

I would first like to thank you for your help and support. Without that contribution, I would have never graduated and completed my degree, so I am very thankful.

Attending my tribal college was a big step for me because I didn't have much financially. The Fund provided (financial assistance) when I had none, for books and tuition. There are a lot of students trying hard to better themselves on their reservations by attending their tribal colleges. Most students struggle with poverty and low income, and jobs are hard to come by; the American Indian College Fund has seen us through the most critical times. We need as much time studying subject areas rather than trying to work our way through college. No matter how much money, every little bit helps. I am a single parent and I am thankful that this scholarship was available for me. It helped me to stay in school, and I looked forward to receiving it, which encouraged me to get good grades.

A scholarship not only gives financial support to students, it gives a lot of encouragement and hope. Knowing that there are people out there who are willing and caring enough to help me financially added to my drive to succeed. People like you give others the opportunity to improve and enhance our way of life with education. I would say that it has given us hope and courage to do things we thought were unattainable, and a door to see the world, if you want it, through education.

College education is a must in order to survive in this world. Yet, American Indians lack the financial support needed to even begin to focus on their education. Jobs are scarce and many of us do not see a future full of opportunities like our non-Native brothers and sisters do. We never had the chance to excel, and we can if given the chance with education. Your donations give us a chance to become what we've dreamed of and a chance to change the world, starting with our tribes. The very lives of our people are collectively impacted in a positive way because the Fund is helping us.

You are helping the education of the role models of the Native American population. We need people who will go to college, graduate and return to their home reservations to teach and share that knowledge with their people. Our children need the chance to continue to grow, and they grow freely at Indian colleges. Let them know they need an education and you believe in them. If you could help give one Native American student the courage and self-esteem needed to go on to earn a higher degree, it will be worth it. Knowledge is a great thing to invest in.

**You, as donors, have and do change lives, and I am one you have given a chance to. Right now, you are the dream makers because you have given me the support I needed to dream.**

**Thank you for contributing to the American Indian College Fund.**

In 1999, the American Indian College Fund launched Campaign Sii Ha Sin (a Navajo word that loosely translates as the English language concept of "hope") to raise funds for much-needed facility improvements at tribal colleges. Prior to the campaign, the hope for improvement of facilities was elusive for many tribal colleges. Although tribal colleges now encompass all levels of curricular and structural sophistication, prior to the campaign most of them operated in decentralized, ad hoc campuses. Many tribal colleges were housed in abandoned or donated buildings that harbored numerous hazardous conditions such as exposed asbestos, rodents and snakes, and crumbling foundations. Yet, the high cost of facilities improvement and construction was often impossible for tribal colleges focusing their limited funds on classroom instruction and related expenses. Indeed, a 1997 study of tribal colleges' facilities needs revealed that more than $200 million was needed for construction, renovation and repairs for all of the colleges combined, an average of $8 million per college (ORBIS Associates 1997).

Despite these infrastructure challenges, enrollment at tribal colleges across the nation was increasing. In 1982, approximately 2,100 students were enrolled (O'Brien 1992). By 1995-1996, that number increased dramatically to 24,363 undergraduates and 260 graduates—a faster rate than American Indian enrollment at non-tribal higher educational institutions (Cunningham et al. 1999, C1). This increase has been cited as the result of increased demand for education on reservations and from American Indians in general, as well as the ability of tribal colleges to provide accessible, quality, culturally appropriate education for American Indians (AIHEC 2000, Boyer 1997, Schuyler 1992). Indeed, past research has shown that students of tribal colleges exhibit higher grades, lower drop-out rates and are more likely to succeed at continuing education beyond tribal college (James 2001, Monette 1995). The rise in the number of non-tribal students attending these colleges is also indicative of the general quality and accessibility of tribal college education. Thus, with increasing enrollment and curriculum demand, the tribal colleges continued to struggle to meet these needs in inadequate facilities.

Campaign Sii Ha Sin came at a critical time for tribal colleges. Many were bursting at the seams and the campaign provided funding to meet the increasing educational needs in Indian Country. The campaign further provided the colleges with a rare opportunity to pursue the dream of providing Indian students and communities with quality facilities that reflect the quality of the educational opportunities housed within. It provided them with Sii Ha Sin, or hope.

# Organization of the Case Studies

The site-visit tribal colleges were selected by a team at the American Indian College Fund to demonstrate the impact of Campaign Sii Ha Sin on colleges representing different geographic areas, histories and educational emphasis. The map (Figure 9) displays the location and names of participating colleges. At each college, a research team of two interviewers, one from Harder+Company Community Research and one from the American Indian College Fund, interviewed eight tribal college stakeholders: board of trustees members, president, facilities manager, dean of students, the longest-tenured staff person, a faculty member whose teaching was impacted by the facilities improvements, current students and tribal elders. The team also conducted a focus group with alumni to document the longer-term impact of tribal college on those who attended them. The purpose of these interviews and focus groups was to gather information from many vantage points about the impact of facilities improvement and the tribal colleges in general.

What follows are case studies of the importance of Campaign Sii Ha Sin on six tribal colleges. The first section provides a cross-analysis of the common themes from the six colleges, as well as an overview of the importance of facilities to educational organizations and the resources available to tribal colleges for facilities improvements. The remaining sections include the individual tribal college case studies.

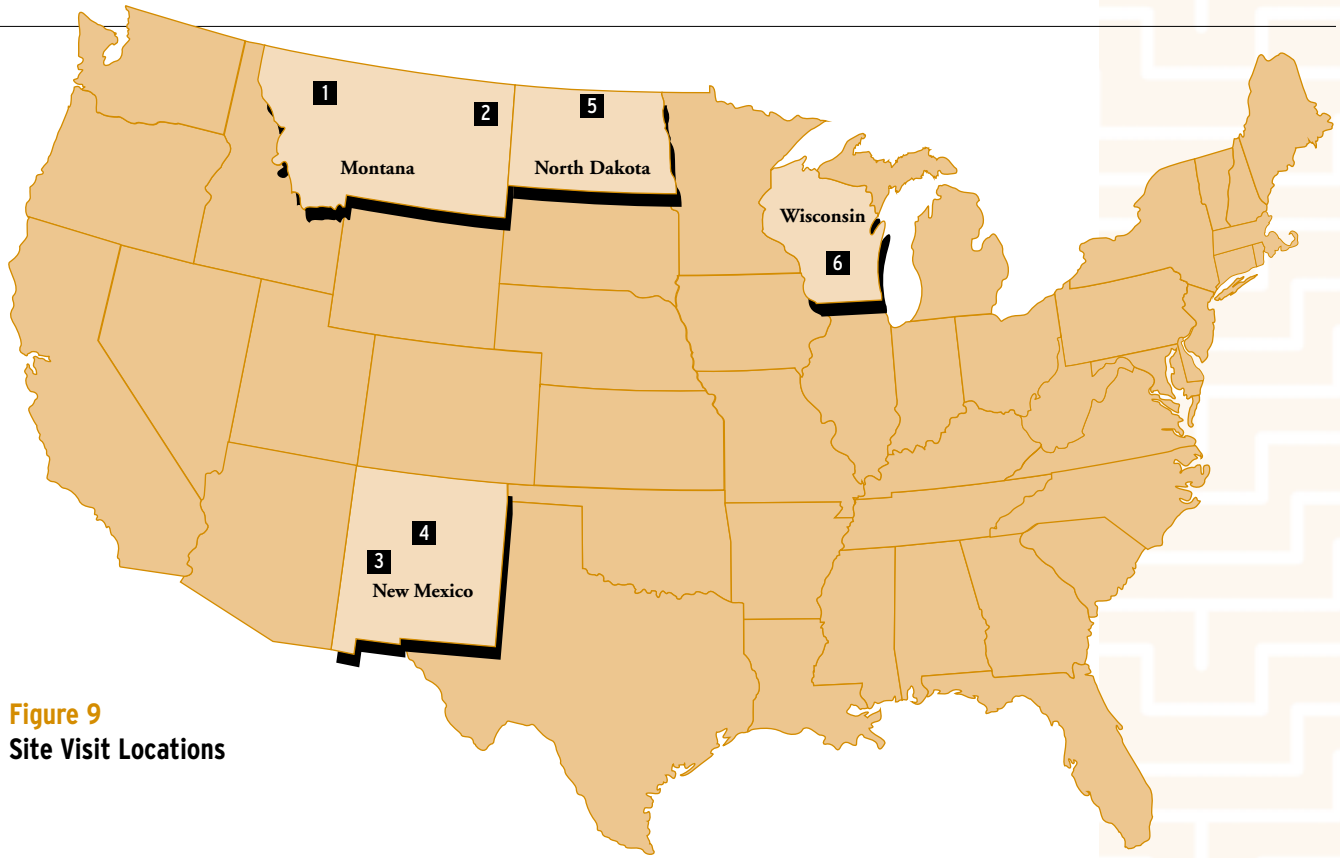



**Figure 9**
**Site Visit Locations**

### Montana

1 Blackfeet Community College
P.O. Box 819
Browning, MT 59417
(406) 338-5411
www.bfcc.org

2 Fort Peck Community College
P.O. Box 398
Poplar, MT 59255
(406) 768-5551
www.fpcc.edu

### New Mexico

3 Crownpoint Institute of Technology
P.O. Box 849
Crownpoint, NM 87313
(505) 786-5851
www.cit.cc.nm.us

4 Institute of American Indian Arts
83 Avan Nu Po Road
Santa Fe, NM 87505
(505) 424-2300
www.iaiancad.org

### North Dakota

5 Turtle Mountain Community College
P.O. Box 340
Belcourt, ND 58316
(701) 477-7862
www.tm.edu

### Wisconsin

6 College of Menominee Nation
P.O. Box 1179
Keshena, WI 54135
(715) 799-4921
www.menominee.edu

# Overview of the Impact of Campaign Sii Ha Sin

*"(Facilities) not only provide the setting where staff offer services and clients access them, they help to determine the type of services that can be offered and the number of clients who can be served. They affect staff and client morale and influence community attitudes toward the agency… In short, facilities affect an organization's effectiveness, financial stability, the quality and quantity of services provided, and more"*

(Showalter and Itzkowitz 2002, 7).

## Importance of Facilities

Facilities are a critical component of any organizations' success. Without adequate facilities, organizations begin with a deficit that threatens the sustainability of the institution and compromises the potential positive impacts by detracting attention from the true work at hand. Facilities are particularly important to the educational enterprise because studies have long shown that the lack of adequate equipment and facilities compromises student learning, retention and even matriculation (Bartlett 2003, Schneider 2002, Clark 2002, Strange and Banning 2001, Lackney 1999). Indeed, a recent National Center for Education Statistics report noted that, "Facilities problems affect teaching and learning, student and staff health, day-to-day building operations, and the long-range fiscal health of the entire education organization." (NCES, n.d.). Likewise, a recent study by the Bush Foundation found that facilities are critical to an organization's success (see quotation to the left).

Tribal colleges frequently lack the infrastructure to raise funds and do not have dedicated state funding allocated to ensure their operations. As a result, most tribal colleges have been relegated to substandard buildings and ad hoc campuses. In many cases, the bricks and mortar that keep the tribal colleges operating have not been the physical buildings, but rather the sheer drive of the students and the dedication of the faculty and staff. The impact of facilities on students was apparent upon completion of the American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduates Survey. Indeed, there appeared to be a positive correlation between the quality of the facility and the ability of the college to enhance a student's educational experience.

Campaign Sii Ha Sin was developed to meet the growing needs of tribal colleges faced with growing demand and substandard facilities. Through this study, we visited six different colleges, from New Mexico to Wisconsin, to gauge the impact of the campaign on students, faculty and the surrounding community. Each college used the money differently and experienced unique impacts as a result of their construction project. Yet, tribal colleges experienced similar challenges and successes. Below is a brief discussion of the challenges facing tribal colleges, the difficulty of securing funding for capital improvements, and the cross-site visit findings of the impact of Campaign Sii Ha Sin.

## Challenges Facing Tribal Colleges

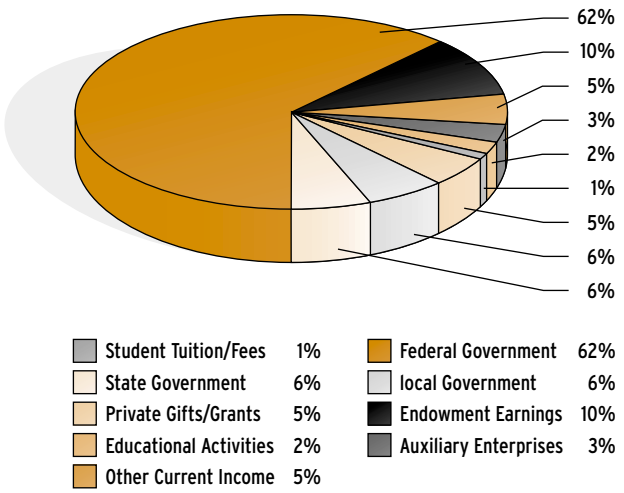
The overarching similarity of all six colleges, and tribal colleges in general, is that prior to the campaign, facilities were not adequate to meet the needs of the student population. At Blackfeet Community College, students attended classrooms that were infested with snakes and rodents. The Institute for American Indian Arts rented dilapidated World War II barracks from a local college. Fort Peck Community College used an abandoned Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) building and a tribal affairs building. Even colleges that were successful in developing relatively new campuses—such as Turtle Mountain Community College, Crownpoint Institute of Technology and College of Menominee Nation—needed additional help in renovating existing buildings that were poorly constructed or in expanding their facilities to meet demand.

And this demand is growing. Tribal colleges have experienced unprecedented growth in the numbers of both Indian and non-Indian students in past years. Between 1990 and 1996, fall enrollment of American Indian students at tribal colleges increased by 62 percent compared with 36 percent at non-tribal higher educational institutions during the same period

(Cunningham et al. 1999). This spike in enrollment is in part due to the success Indians have experienced at tribal colleges. Fewer than 10 percent of Native students who go directly from reservation high schools to mainstream colleges earn their degrees. Yet, after attending a tribal college for just one year, Indian students are four times more likely to succeed when they transfer to a non-Indian institution (Boyer 1989 cited in Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching). As tribal colleges become respected places of higher learning for both tribal and non-tribal people, and the cost of state education and enrollment caps increase, tribal colleges can expect an increase in the number of students attending. Furthermore, population projections suggest that American Indian children will be a strongly emerging population in higher education in the next decade. For example, 45 percent of the current Menominee Nation's population in Wisconsin is under the age of 15. This explosion in the number of potential Indian college students, coupled with the fact that Native students have been shown to thrive in tribal colleges as opposed to non-tribally controlled colleges, makes the role of tribal colleges all the more significant.

Despite the obvious needs, funds for capital improvements at tribal colleges are scarce. Because most of these colleges are located on reservations, which are federal trust lands, tribal colleges receive little to no state support (see Figure 10).[16] The federal government, largely responsible for the upkeep and development of the tribal colleges due to treaty obligations and trust responsibilities, has historically not provided the necessary financial support to the tribal colleges. For many tribal colleges, this leaves the onus of facilities improvement and expansion to the institutions themselves. Yet, as small institutions with limited financial support, raising money in the private sector is a challenge. Thus, both public and private-sector funding opportunities for tribal colleges are important to understand in order to place Campaign Sii Ha Sin and its impact in the appropriate context.

**Figure 10:**
**Current-Fund Revenue of Tribal Colleges: 1996-97***




* NCES Finance: 2000

16 Based on the most recent data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics.

## Facilities Improvement Challenges

Tribal colleges are very different from "mainstream" colleges by virtue of the treaty obligations and trust responsibilities long ago established between sovereign Indian tribes and the United States government. These obligations and responsibilities require the federal government to provide funding for Indian programs such as tribal colleges. In particular, the federal government is responsible for protection of property and provision of public services that were not available through state and local governments. Federal funding comes from a number of dedicated funding streams, such as the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act of 1978 (TCCUAA), the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act (accessed by two vocational tribal colleges), and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) funds for colleges owned and operated by the BIA. Tribal colleges also benefit from their recent 1994 federally acknowledged land-grant status, which provides them with equity grants, shared interest from an endowment fund and the ability to compete for extension program funding.[17]

Despite these federal resources, only a portion of these appropriated funds is actually allocated to tribal colleges. In fact, the facilities provisions of many of these acts, such as the TCCUAA and the Carl D. Perkins, for construction and renovation at tribal colleges, have never been funded. Adding to the tribal colleges' financial difficulties is that the heyday of federal funding for higher educational facilities was in the 1960s, at the beginning of the tribal college movement. The overarching downward trend in federal government support for academic infrastructure since then has made funding difficult for long-established colleges, let alone tribal colleges. Indeed, by the early 1990s, most capital funding for higher educational institutions was shouldered by local and state governments, which most tribal colleges did not have access to due to their location on trust territory (Merosotis, Chun, and O'Brien 1991).

The private sector is another source where tribal colleges have found capital construction funding. However, the opportunities for private-sector funding are often limited. In 1998, the percentage of U.S. foundations' aggregated resources dedicated to all American Indian causes and concerns, let alone tribal colleges, is a low 0.03 percent of foundation grants made in the United States (Harvard Project n.d, 7). Loans are difficult to obtain because traditional lenders are often reluctant to consider making a loan to tribal colleges due to the complexity of reviewing and managing tribal loans, the limited size of the transactions, and the uneven or undesirable collateral. Furthermore, raising these limited private (as well as public) funds is challenging because of the small size of tribal colleges. A recent study by the Bush Foundation noted, "smaller agencies (such as these colleges) lack the infrastructure to raise funds (consequently) their cost of raising each dollar is five times the cost of larger organizations" (Showalter and Itzkowitz 2002, 7). Many American Indian College Fund Tribal College Graduate Survey respondents noted this same challenge. Reporting requirements are the same for large universities as for small tribal colleges, and because many colleges do not have a development department, a limited number of people are responsible for finding and managing the grants. Furthermore, the small amounts of many of the grants given to tribal colleges do not allow them to capitalize on the economies of scale enjoyed by larger institutions. This is particularly of importance for construction in rural areas where the cost of getting a crew and materials to a site is high.

17 For an excellent account of the federal role in tribal college facilities improvement and development, see Cunningham et al. "Options for a Federal Role in Infrastructure Development at Tribal Colleges & Universities" (2000) The Institute for Higher Education Policy.

The income for infrastructure improvement generated from students is also low. Whereas non-tribal community colleges receive approximately 21 percent of their revenues from student tuition and fees, and bachelor's degree-level public universities receive 31 percent, tribal colleges receive only 9 percent (NCES 2002). This is due to three factors. First, tribal colleges purposefully keep their enrollment and fees low as part of their commitment to providing affordable education to Indian students. Second, tribal colleges' ability to generate income from Indian students has been compromised in recent years due to the federal government not fully reimbursing them for costs incurred. By law, most tribal colleges are to receive TCCUAA Title I funds based on a formula of the number of Indian students enrolled (or Indian Student Count, ISC) as "reimbursement" for the tribal colleges' role in fulfilling the federal government's responsibility for providing education. However, the per-ISC level of $6,000 has only been appropriated at $3,916 in the past years (American Indian College Fund, n.d.). Third, the increase in non-Indian student enrollment, which in the case of a few tribal colleges currently comprises nearly half of the student body, has been a financial burden for tribal colleges.[18] The rise in the number of non-Indian students plays a major factor in infrastructure improvements given that tribal colleges do not receive any local assistance from public entities, such as the state, for educating their non-Indian student populations. In any case, whether it be the lack of ISC appropriations or serving increasing numbers of non-subsidized, non-Indian students, the tribal colleges do not receive the funding necessary to make infrastructure improvements. As one recent report pointed out: "The (tribal) colleges are in a situation that is similar to where other institutions were several decades ago. They cannot afford to address the situation on their own, yet they generally cannot turn to state or local governments for local support." (Cunningham et al 2000, 16).

### Figure 11: Leveraging Funds

**The American Indian College Fund was able to use the initial investment from Kellogg to raise $45 million in private sector funding for Campaign Sii Ha Sin.**

The private sector sources for Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds are as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Lilly | $30 million |
| Packard | $10 million |
| Bush | $3 million |
| Tierney | $1 million |
| Maplewood | $717,000 |

Another $87.5 million was leveraged in state, local, tribal, and federal funding for construction by the tribal colleges, totaling $132 million overall. The breakdown is as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Federal Government | $53.9 million |
| Department of Defense | |
| Housing and Urban Development | |
| US Rural Development | |
| Dept of Education | |
| State Governments | $11.1 million |
| Private Donations | $8.6 million |
| Tribal Government Donations | $12.7 million |
| Tribal Government Land Donations | 264 acres of land |

18 The increase in non-Indian students is due to the pull factors of tribal colleges' quality education, geographic and financial accessibility, and the improvements made at colleges through Campaign Sii Ha Sin. Tribal colleges offer open enrollment to all peoples, regardless of ethnic background, and most offer this education at the same cost. The colleges' open enrollment is an important part of their service mission of education and is viewed as a critical tool in overcoming ethnic/racial tensions. As a student at College of the Menominee Nation stated, "It's open to everyone, not just the Menominee Nation. It not only breaks through Native and non-Native boundaries, but between different tribes. It brings people together and you realize we're on the same path... or at least parallel." Only one tribal college requires higher fees for non-Indians (Salish Kootenai College) as well as off-reservation tribal members and other American Indians. The push factors for non-Indian students include the rising cost of state colleges and caps placed on enrollment.

## Successes of Campaign Sii Ha Sin

In the absence of funding to improve college infrastructure, Campaign Sii Ha Sin was critical to furthering the resolve and impact of the nation's tribal colleges. By visiting six tribal colleges and hearing from their administrators, staff, students and alumni, it was clear that the campaign had impacts that extend well beyond new bricks and shining classrooms. Listed below are the five main successes of the campaign:

***Established a track record of success for emerging institutions:*** Some of the tribal colleges visited had never worked with a grant of this size. The opportunity to be good stewards of funds and successfully completing a large grant established a history of success they will be able to draw upon when seeking funding and implementing future projects. The colleges understood the possibilities of the campaign and subsequent high visibility of the grant. As one case study respondent noted, "Our failures here are all of our failures, and our successes are all of our successes. I say that because if I mismanaged or didn't use the money appropriately, guess what [potential funders] will say?"

***Flexibility of funds to meet unique college needs:*** The American Indian College Fund, which oversaw the grant, provided a flexible environment for colleges to utilize the funds in ways that met their needs. Some colleges were more advanced in their grant-seeking abilities and strategically utilized the funds as seed monies to secure future funding. Other colleges, who were newer and/or less financially secure, used the money for their first major construction project on their campuses. In both cases, Fund staff worked closely with each of the colleges to meet their needs in hopes of developing their track records of success for future granting endeavors.

***Colleges leveraged new opportunities for continued growth:*** As a result of the successful completion of campaign construction projects, all tribal colleges secured additional funds for infrastructure improvement. The colleges generated momentum based on the good stewardship of construction dollars and investments, and public and private funders responded with additional grants and loans for building projects. Many colleges doubled their campuses, professionalized their services (including cultural courses), and created a prominent place in their tribal and non-tribal community. (See "Leveraging Funds" Figure 11)

***Increase the college's desirability:*** The varied construction projects often developed the newest, most technologically advanced institution on reservations and/or the surrounding communities. Many case study respondents shared that, prior to the construction projects, tribal colleges were perceived by Native and non-Native peoples as "third world" or "Mickey Mouse" colleges. The result of the construction was, as one college administrator put it, a demystification of the "poor Indian image" to show "professional Native people." Now, respondents uniformly characterized their colleges as institutions on par with other non-tribal communities' higher education facilities. Current students frequently shared that their fellow students were proud of their college, and alumni shared that their children now consider the tribal college as an attractive higher education option. The draw of the colleges is evident in the striking increase in Indian and non-Indian enrollment at nearly all of the colleges visited. Furthermore, tribal colleges, which traditionally served non-traditional students, now increasingly draw younger students and play an early role in preparing Indian youth for educational success.

***Established the colleges as a strong, positive, central force in the community:*** Tribal colleges have long played an important role in individual student's lives and in the economic development of American Indian and surrounding communities. However, with the campaign, new opportunities were presented to often-isolated rural communities. Many tribal colleges

now have cafeterias, which provide space for cross-generational and cross-cultural exchanges. The cultural centers have become repositories of cultural knowledge to preserve and retain cultural artifacts, regalia, ceremonies and languages. The new auditoriums and meeting places provide safe places for community gatherings and opportunities to attract traveling artists, lecturers and musicians. The facilities also provide computer and library access to rural populations that was previously not available. In short, the colleges provide critical positive outlets for students and their communities at large that often did not exist prior to these build outs.

## Conclusion

Campaign Sii Ha Sin raised the visibility and opportunities for many tribal colleges. It also increased student and community expectations for the colleges. Many colleges that were previously operating in substandard conditions now see the importance and impact provided by the first major capital campaign improvements. College staff is actively looking for new opportunities to continue the momentum begun by the campaign. And they are not alone. Many tribal college communities also have increased expectations for the colleges and many communities now see more clearly than ever that the colleges are a major part of the self-determination, independence and self-reliance sought by Indian communities. Yet, despite these heightened expectations with the successes of the campaign, funding for capital improvements, particularly at tribal colleges, remains a challenge.

The following six case studies highlight the importance of facilities in the tribal college experience. Each case study is organized into three main sections: 1) college history of expansion, which outlines the history of the college as it relates to their facilities; 2) overview of how the college used Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds; and 3) new directions or impacts of the facilities on the college, students and surrounding community.

## Passing on the bundle

*I come from a great running community. We had this relay back in the days of the Pueblo revolt where we sent messages by runners to the different Pueblos, even out to Hopi. We now have this commemorative run and carry a medicine and prayer bundle (to the Pueblos)… (Building the colleges is) like that—a relay. I am carrying (the successes of developing a campus) for now and then I am going to hand it off… We have to carry our gift and our experiences to other (colleges and funders) and share that with them. Sort of like the Pueblo runners did in 1680—take the information, the message, to the next one.*

- Institute of American Indian Arts staff

# Blackfeet Community College: Dedication and Serendipity

In 2000, the new multipurpose building at Blackfeet Community College (BCC) in Browning, Montana, was dedicated to the community. The building, which houses administration, classrooms and a meeting area, marks a new era for the college. Five years ago the college's only facilities included a group of small buildings, some condemned and others ripe with decay. Today, with the support of Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds, the dedicated students of BCC walk into new buildings, state-of-the-art labs, and classrooms wired to access the state's distance learning classes. As might be expected, the positive impact of the facilities improvements has been far reaching, from increased enrollment and retention to a growth in the community's sense of pride in their tribal college.

## History of BCC's Expansion and Facilities

In 1974, the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council chartered Blackfeet Community College. BCC, situated at the bottom of the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, first offered extension courses on the reservation through an agreement with Flathead Valley Community College. With a steady increase in enrollment and the availability of funds through the U.S. Department of Education Title III, BCC was established as an independent institution.

Since the college's establishment, its founders, as well as its students and tribe, were committed to obtaining education despite substandard conditions.

Students took classes in an old skating rink and in a garage that flooded in the wintertime and harbored snakes and rodents in the spring. One student recalled, "We used to have snakes come out of the walls and in the summer we used to have rodents, like gophers and mice, rolling around. There were salamanders and no air conditioning and sewer problems. … But we were dedicated." Faculty recalled cramming themselves into a small damp building and "in any vacant room or building we would have classes." Indeed, on a reservation that currently has 78 percent unemployment, the college provided a center for personal and cultural growth and facilitated developing individual self-esteem and tribal self-determination. A current student shared, "(BCC) builds your self-confidence and prepares you for the university. It builds you up for the next step of your life." A BCC graduate reflected, "I feel like I owe the college."

Since there was community interest in and demand for quality education, coupled with poor quality facilities, the tribe was determined to improve the educational facilities of the college. In 1995, BCC entered a strategic planning process to prioritize its most pressing needs. BCC surveyed the community and college faculty to identify the priority areas of improvement. Not surprisingly, the top priority was improved facilities. A board member recalled, "There was no college. The whole thing was filled with gravel and dirt, was more or less an old swamp." The poor facilities, described as "third world" by some, were a major reason why reservation youth often attended college far from the security and support of their tribe rather than attend BCC. However, following a national trend, these same youth often returned to the reservation after dropping out of the non-tribally controlled college due to culture shock and lack of preparation and support at non-tribally controlled colleges. Current BCC graduates acknowledged the difficulties of attending non-tribally controlled colleges, sharing that "I would have failed eventually because of the culture shock." In addition, it was important to have an educational facility of which they could be proud.

Following the college's strategic planning process, the college envisioned developing a campus that provided quality educational and cultural learning facilities for the reservation. A former BCC student shared, "We had really shabby trailers and anything we could round up back then for a classroom. Appearance makes a big difference with the morale."

Despite the need for improved facilities, BCC officials were unable to locate grants that specifically addressed facilities improvement. Without funding available but with a strong identified need, BCC assumed the risk of obtaining a $750,000 construction loan for 20 years at 9.5 percent interest to fund the necessary infrastructure improvements. The loan, large enough to require the backing of two banks, was guaranteed by use of a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant. The risk to the college and the tribe was doubled by the fact that the tribe operated one of the banks providing the loan. In recalling this landmark decision, a member of the BCC board of trustees remembered:

*"Where were we going to go? What could we do? We had a building here with watersnakes in it—the women wouldn't dare go in it for classes or the building over there (an old condemned roller rink) where you could get poisoned, or gassed, or you never know if it could cause cancer or what—you don't know cause of the fuel seepage. (The college) was cornered and the (tribe) had to make a decision so they thought, 'Well, lets get a loan and get this building built and we will suffer the consequences down the road'."*

The college and the tribe understood the risk, one BCC board member recalled, “The chairman of the board at that time told me he was scared to death,” but that the community’s need outweighed the potential risk.

The availability of Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds was announced at this critical juncture, providing the required funds to reduce the loan to a manageable amount, construct new facilities, furnish and equip all the new buildings, and instill a sense of momentum and success in the tribe and the college. “The capital campaign paid $750,000 of the loan and that was the best thing that ever happened.”

### Campaign Sii Ha Sin Overview

- 24,000-sq.-ft. multipurpose building
- Purchased equipment and furniture for new building
- Refurbished vocational education buildings
- Refurbished math and science building

## Overview of BCC's Campaign Sii Ha Sin-Funded Projects

In 1998, BCC had already secured a large loan from a bank with the intent of building newer, safer facilities for the college. BCC and tribal members who recall this period described the process as "walking the road while you're building it" and dedicated themselves to the endeavor of finding the funds to pay for the improvements.

The availability of capital campaign funds, announced one year after the bank loan was secured, was an unexpected windfall for the college. Unlike other colleges, BCC decided to incorporate a cultural learning center, called the Teepee Room, in the multipurpose building and therefore did not need funding to complete a log cabin project.

The campaign instead provided the opportunity for BCC to reduce a portion of its construction loan. However, with no funding prospects for facilities improvement on the horizon, the college decided to pay down the loan to the level that was manageable through enrollment fees, thereby saving the college and the tribe more than a million dollars in interest. BCC used the remaining Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds to embark on a number of new building projects and buy furniture and equipment to make the new buildings inviting to students. The tribe used a court settlement reached at the same time the campaign was announced to provide the 10 percent match for Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds.

The momentum of the construction, the court settlement and Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds was quickened by a USDA grant. BCC, finally having the fiscal capacity to leverage other funds, applied and received a USDA grant to renovate the vocational education building and rebuild the math and science building that required a steep 25 percent match. After all current construction is complete, BCC will have more than doubled its campus buildings in five years, expanding to 11 buildings, four of which were partly or completely funded by Campaign Sii Ha Sin.

A number of college representatives expressed mixed feelings about the distribution of Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds. Respondents generally felt the American Indian College Fund was flexible in working with the colleges and yet some respondents shared that the campaign required some start-up costs that, while necessary, still required some financial outlay, which was substantial for a financially disadvantaged college. One respondent shared, "The capital campaign is a little more complicated (than the USDA grant). The USDA pretty much helps you get started, (the campaign) doesn't pay until (the construction) is actually done."

BCC encountered few challenges with the construction process. After the initial environmental studies were completed to secure the title for the land and the loan from the bank, the job was contracted to an outside firm. The firm then worked with the Blackfeet Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO) to hire reservation contractors. As with any economic endeavor undertaken on the Blackfeet reservation, TERO levied a standard 2 percent tax on the total project and the tribe is still deciding if they will fold this tax back in to the college's building project. One of the board members who works with TERO suggested that the American Indian College Fund would benefit from insisting the 2 percent TERO tax is dedicated to be reabsorbed in the colleges' Campaign Sii Ha Sin-funded projects, "so that way you are defining that money and saying that it is going to be used for construction purposes or some sort of educational purposes. … Some tribes will balk at that… but we are not trying to tell them what to do, we are just trying to guarantee that the full million dollars is going to go for construction."

## New Directions

The new facilities invigorated the college and the surrounding community. One of the most poignant results of expanding and improving facilities has been the increase in enrollment. In 1994-95, prior to the building, the student body was estimated to be 250 to 300 students enrolling, many of whom were part-time students. The dean of students now anticipates 600 enrolled students in the coming year. In addition to the increase in overall numbers, BCC is attracting younger students, resulting in a drop in the average age of students. The dean of academic affairs estimated that 80 percent of BCC's current students are below the age of 22, compared to only 10 to15 percent just five years ago. The number of male students also has increased, which respondents speculated was linked to the desirability of the campus, the social outlet the new campus buildings provide, and an increase in the types of course offerings. Like other colleges, BCC attributes this reduction in the average age of students to the new building. One member of the Board of Regents shared:

*"Before when everybody asked where are you going to college and they (whispered) 'BCC, I take my generals at BCC because they are easier.' Now they are saying (loudly), 'I am going to Blackfeet Community College. I am getting my start there. That is my foundation.' That is what we want them to see, come to BCC and we'll give you a strong foundation on your educational needs and if you want to go on, you can make it after BCC."*

### Major Impacts of Campaign Sii Ha Sin

- Leveraged other building funds
- Increased enrollment
- Attracted younger students
- Increased community pride
- College has become the hub of the community
- "Professionalized" Blackfeet studies and encouraged cultural retention

With the new facility, the community is more aware of BCC and its opportunities. As one current student shared, "Before the (improvements to the facilities) I said 'I'll never go there.' But now the buildings are nice, they've added classes that are more interesting, and they have great equipment." This is a departure from the reasons students used prior to the new construction. Before the renovations, students attended BCC because it was convenient, near to family and inexpensive. The faculty also has noted the change in the way students and the community view the college. One faculty member explained, "BCC is looked up to now." A board member shared:

*"It's the atmosphere. If you walk into a building that smells and is dark and dingy and bleak and it leaks (it's disheartening), or you are coming to work in a building like this. … If you walk down the hall when the students are here, everyone here is having a blast. It's nice to walk into a nice building and wouldn't you want to work in a place like that? People just started applying and now they are fighting over jobs."*

Finally, a major change in the student population and enrollment patterns is that students are staying for more semesters, which also adds the benefit of easing BCC's federal reporting requirements.

However, increased enrollment is not without drawbacks. Enrollment of non-Indian students has risen with the completion of the new building, and the dean of students anticipates that non-Indian enrollment will continue to increase. BCC, as all tribal colleges, asserts that it is open to all and the rise in non-Indian enrollment undoubtedly marks a positive change in the surrounding community's perception of the college. However, the rise in non-Indian students at BCC may have a negative effect on the college's long-term fiscal solvency. Federal funding to tribal colleges is authorized at $6,000 per Indian FTE or Indian Student Count (ISC), but appropriated at only $3,916 per ISC. This results in a funding gap of $2,084 per student or 25 percent less than authorized (Fund 2002 presentation). The Montana state government has consistently passed resolutions that the legislature will provide the tribal college with funding for these non-Indian or non-beneficiary students. However, these resolutions are up for debate every two years, and BCC has expressed concern that if the resolution does not pass, there could be considerable economic impacts on the college.

Another positive impact of Campaign Sii Ha Sin's funded new buildings is that the college has become the undisputed center for the community. The next nearest large town of comparable size is 125 miles away, making the college a premiere location for community activity in the area. Outside organizations such as the highway patrol and firemen have held trainings in the facility and the surrounding communities are more frequently turning to the college as a venue for conferences and training sites. One Board of Regents member shared, "To me, the community, our reservation, is looking at the college as the place to be. (The community is) using our buildings and we are saying that we are presentable, we have a nice building, and a place to meet for the community. So now, everybody knows Blackfeet Community College. They have a sense of pride." Since the new buildings were constructed, students stay well after class to linger and socialize with friends. Elders come to the college to mix with the young student population, meet friends, guest speak at classes or attend ceremonies. The new multipurpose building is also the site for community feeds, trainings and the "Day of the Blackfeet," a cultural celebration that incorporates many of the reservation's main cultural organizations. In fact, the college adjusted its hours, keeping the multipurpose building open later in order to accommodate the increased use of college space. Faculty members observe that the activities centered at the college continue to pull the reservation's youth into BCC's orbit.

Faculty members also shared that the cultural facilities (such as the teepee room, bilingual signs and culturally appropriate design) has "professionalized" the Blackfeet culture. By sponsoring cultural events, the culture has become an element of pride and something to pursue, develop and retain. The new facility built with Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds has a teepee room in which elders and community members can come for smudges and ceremonies. The room is reported to be in nearly constant use and has its own entryway so that it is accessible by tribal members after campus hours. As one board member shared, "The college is going to have to be the one who keeps (our culture) alive here. … We have so many different ethnic groups on the reservation, so many different societies and clans and they are different culturally in their own way. So, it's going to be a tough road, but I do think that the college needs to be there for everybody."

With the momentum and energy created by Campaign Sii Ha Sin, BCC is looking forward to constructing an event center on its campus this winter. Like other colleges, BCC recognizes the need for a center that can house large college, tribal and community events. The lands have been secured and the college is currently looking for an architect. The college also has secured Office of Education funding to rehabilitate one of the campus' original buildings, the old roller rink. College administrators and staff recognized a number of needs that are still outstanding, including student housing (BCC loses some of their youth to Salish Kootenai College, which provides student housing) and landscaping for the new college (it currently consists of dirt and wild grasses).

BCC is also looking forward to addressing the issues that are important to the larger tribe. “One of the things that the college is doing is that we are beginning to look at areas where there are going to be employment opportunities in the future, which has never happened before.” The college is in the process of identifying needs by reviewing the 10-year strategic plan and what programs the college could offer that would fit into this larger strategic plan.

## Conclusion

The Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds came at a critical juncture for Blackfeet Community College. The funds assisted the college in expanding its campus and providing much-needed services. This ultimately improved the effectiveness of the college and its ability to meet the needs of the larger community.

# Crownpoint Institute of Technology: Rebuilding Self-Sufficiency

Looking at the new campus buildings rapidly rising from the desert, a tribal elder smiled indulgently and said in Navajo, "They gradate from here and they now work (in our community). I see them at the hospital and the cafeteria. It's admirable because a lot of people come with nothing but an open mind. What they accomplished was pride." From providing skills development to degrees, Crownpoint Institute of Technology has educated the Navajo, Indian and non-Indian community for over a decade. Campaign Sii Ha Sin provided the basis of funding for the institute to transform itself from the remnants of the boarding school era to the brink of an accredited college.

## History of CIT's Expansion and Facilities

Crownpoint Institute of Technology (CIT), located in the checkerboard area immediately south of the Navajo reservation in northern New Mexico, was initially created as a vocational training center and a sister institution to the more academically oriented DinÈ College. The Navajo Nation officially dedicated the training center in 1979 to provide short-term job and skill development to tribal members, and the campus was initially built with funding assistance from the United States Department of Labor.

CIT was based on the values of Diné educational philosophy, which encourages critical thinking, planning, investigation and reflection. A tribal elder explained the important elements of education as the foundation for success of Native peoples: "You build yourself a ladder and then you have to go up the steps. It may be hard and tough, but it must be you who does it. It's you who has succeeded." From its inception, CIT demonstrated its commitment to integrating traditional Navajo culture into the campus and learning environment in order to optimize tribal students' success. "We're just more relaxed with the teachers," said a CIT alumnus. "A lot of times we are more frustrated (with non-tribal education) because being a Native American we don't ask questions. Here, the teachers have been there and the teachers understood (our culture)." Another alumni asserted, "If we were in a city that had a tribal and a state (college), I would probably go with the tribal knowing that I would be more relaxed with the Native Americans. I'm not going (to be) with other people who don't think we have a chance."

In 1987, the college changed its name to Crownpoint Institute of Technology and its emphasis to the certificates it could confer with its new accreditation status. By this time, CIT's facilities showed signs of wear and poor construction. When the campus was constructed 10 years ago, the

grounds were not properly graded for drainage and the building's foundations "floated" on the surface. Consequently, the campus' buildings flooded with the summer rains and the walls and floors buckled with retained moisture. Former students and college staff recalled that doors could not close because of warping and the walls separated from the floors. "It got so bad," the current president recalled, "and we had so much rain, it came to the point where we couldn't use (one of the) buildings because everywhere you looked there was sediment. The hallways and some of the classrooms collapsed." The quality of the facilities affected how students interacted with their environment, with each other and with their studies. "When you have to go to college in a facility that is falling down, it's not very conducive to learning and calls your attention to something else," said a board member. "The behavior and results of our classes didn't reflect that we were running a tribal college. We had behaviors we didn't want to retain." Yet, CIT continued to seek funding that would support its mission and improve its course and facilities offerings.

CIT received a visit from a U.S. Senate subcommittee when the college changed its name and focus and, as a result of the state of the campus, received a grant through the U.S. Department of Commerce for portable buildings. These buildings would keep CIT functioning while its officials pursued funding for a new campus. The college also arranged to lease space from a uranium mining company until the college's permanent structures were completed. With the preparations for expansion complete, the college now needed to identify funding for expansion. In 1991, CIT was one of two tribal colleges to receive earmarked congressional funding for vocational education[19] and assured a source of funding for the college, although the amount of the allocation was somewhat unpredictable. CITT also benefited from the Navajo Nation's decision to provide a general appropriation for the college. With these funds in hand, the college developed a master plan for campus development. "Space was a problem," one CIT staff member recalled. "Space for the students really hindered their growth and our growth as an institution."

The costs for expansion were staggering. CIT had approximately 20,000 square feet in three buildings that needed to be demolished and rebuilt. Other buildings sustained water damage. The library, a critical component of any higher learning institution, could only seat 16 to 20 students comfortably and had only three computers without Internet connections and one computer with an electronic catalogue. Despite these shortcomings, students exhibited a passion for learning and a dedication to pursuing their education. One student recalled wanting to get into computers, but did not have access to a computer to practice and study. He subsequently drew a keyboard on paper and practiced typing in his room every night. "I fell in love with CIT. It's my school and it's really a springboard for other colleges."

The college began to search for funds and found possibilities in state and federal agency coffers. With these resources it was able to restore some of the buildings and construct a small library; however, the amount of available funding was frequently not enough to aggressively pursue the master plan or required so steep a match that it was not accessible to the college. CIT's president offered this comment:

*"We don't have line items or streamlined dollars earmarked to operate our programs. I think traditional institutions have it made because they have government that they can go to and request dollars and the dollars are right there when they open the front door every year. We don't, and I think that is the challenge every year… It is challenging but you get the rewards after you see (the students) go through the programs."*

19 Title III Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education. The other tribal vocational college that benefited from this act was United Tribes Technical College in North Dakota.

At this crossroad, CIT heard of Campaign Sii Ha Sin. The campaign provided the much-needed funding to support the initial phases of growth and it helped the college leverage the resources and momentum needed to improve and expand CIT.

## Overview of CIT's Campaign Sii Ha Sin-Funded Projects

In 1999, CIT used the initial campaign-planning grant to revisit the initial master plan, update it and prioritize needs. The planning process proved to be invaluable not only for providing a clear roadmap for campus development, but for the morale of the college: "We came from a deplorable environment to a better physical plan and the thinking of the board and the staff shifted." (member of board of directors) With the aid of campaign funds, the college developed phase one of the college's master plan, including a dormitory, married housing, a library extension and a cultural center. The flexible nature of the campaign also allowed the college to complete other small existing projects, such as the extension of the road to new buildings on campus. "If we didn't have (the campaign), I don't think we would have completed that project." (facilities manager)

Although the Fund contributed to the construction of a number of buildings, the campaign's real benefit for CIT was its flexibility. CIT used campaign funds to leverage grants that often required a match too exorbitant for tribal colleges to pursue. "I think the flexibility (of the campaign funds) really helped us here. We decided where to invest the funds we were allocated and how to leverage them. Instead of putting it into one project, we decided where we could get the most out of that dollar. " (president) CIT also realized that many tribal colleges were vying for the same pot of limited funds. Consequently, CIT attempted to pursue funding that other tribal colleges were not seeking in order to maximize all institutions' chances at obtaining funding. "It was not competitive. (CIT) didn't try to compete against sister institutions, and we tried to help them as well. We went after different funding channels instead of what they were after" (president). With the initial $1.3 million in campaign funds and a savvy development plan, the college estimates that it leveraged approximately $12 million in grants.

Another tactic the college initiated to build the campus and stretch dollars was to enter into an open-ended, sole-sourced contract with a team of contractors, builders and architects to develop the campus. CIT's facilities

### Campaign Sii Ha Sin Overview

- Revise master plan
- Completion of dormitory
- Completion of married housing
- Library extension
- Cultural center

manager expressed that by doing so, the college was able to save on start-up times, ensure the same team of quality workers and minimize the expense of materials. The new campus also provided the college with the opportunity to fully integrate traditional designs and sensibilities into the building. For example, one of the new buildings, built in the wake of the campaign, incorporates a Navajo basket or a cradleboard in its design "to showcase our own culture in a sophisticated manner" (college official).

By the completion of the campaign's CIT construction projects, the college will have the basis for a new campus and the start of multiple other buildings. Indeed, with all the current construction and more planned for the campus, the college has held off on campus beautification projects until the bulk of the construction is completed.

## New Directions

The new campus has expanded opportunities for the college and its students and created a demand for its services. "Ten years ago, this was a place to go to school if you had no other place to go because the tribe would pay your way" (college official). Now, students and the community see the college as an attractive option for higher education. According to CIT's president:

*"We are getting more serious students here. For the longest time it was just another boarding school. That was the attitude. But now students are more mature about what they are doing, even in their work. How they apply themselves, they are more mature about things. The employers are coming in here more and taking more of our student."*

The improvements and expansion doubled the college's enrollment. The improvements and expansion in student housing was a major contributor to this increase. Tribal colleges and their reservation communities frequently do not have rental housing opportunities. The new efficiency apartments and housing apartments for married students have fostered a sense of independence for the students, a marked departure from the dormitory-style housing reminiscent of Indian boarding school days. "The old dorm was like the BIA—they felt institutionalized. Now they each have a room" (college staff).

Beyond having adequate housing, however, is having facilities of which students are proud. Faculty noted that students now treat their space differently. "Students see new buildings instead of a run-down place" (faculty member), and a board member noted, "Through changes in the environment, we began to see changes in student incorporating the Navajo philosophy in the curriculum and work plan. It changed the way the faculty designed their plans." Indeed, students frequently commented on the importance of the college in their lives and how the facilities positively impacted their college experience. CIT students, even before the new construction, demonstrated a dedication to the learning process. Alumni shared that they "came here and flowered" and commented on the supportive environment of the college that encourages collaborative learning, rather than competitive pedagogy frequently found at non-tribally controlled colleges. Tribal elders shared that for years the college has graduated students who now work in social services and the community, ensuring that there are linguistic and cultural translators who can help the Navajo Nation survive and flourish. Yet the new buildings bring a sense of pride that did not exist before, in a sense legitimizing the school as being an equal of other schools in the state. "I didn't think much of the tribal college when I first heard about it until I came down and I say, "Hey, well, they are up to it" (recent alumni). Even more importantly, CIT is an appealing motivator for Indian students to pursue higher education. "The campus looked really nice," a recent graduate recalled. "That's why I decided to do something with my life."

The expansion of the campus has raised students' expectations and increased their involvement in student and campus life. Students have taken an active role in the expansion of the college, organizing themselves to beautify the area. Prior to the new campus, there were no clubs. Now there is an activity coordinator who transports students to places such as local powwows, and the student senate is active. Students also increasingly use the facilities. Since the library's construction and expansion, the number of patrons, both student and community, has doubled every year, from 6,760 in 1999-2000 to 21,791 in 2001-2002. In response to increased demand, the library began to stay open during the evenings.

The success of the campus is also evident in how the surrounding community perceives CIT. Tribal elders, board members, faculty and staff all spoke of the importance of operating a college where there is tangible proof of Indian Country's ability and wherewithal to build, develop and grow a Native-run institution. "I value my students getting educated. Long ago they didn't and we've had a lot of setbacks since then. Now kids are getting educated, so I'm so happy for the buildings" (tribal elder). The campus is a gathering place for the community and an important marker of Indian success that continues to inspire future generations. "I always thought we would have to live elsewhere for our kids to get the kind of educational opportunities that they deserve (But now I say to my little girl) you might be able to go to college here someday. We live right across the road" (alumni). CIT staff and students noted that the larger community frequently visits the cafeteria and the new library, providing interactive opportunities for sharing traditional foods and cross-generational communication. But perhaps the biggest indicator of community confidence in CIT was that they approached the college to help them develop a new social service building complex. The college then secured funding for the community to develop a $2.3 million childcare center and social support programs such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, or TANF. In return, the college received classrooms and faculty offices.

CIT also continues to have an impact on the surrounding community. The campaign's construction projects themselves have had a large impact on the community. "So what does that do for the community? The (construction) people employed, we have more programs developed, and we have (hired more staff and faculty). Because construction dollars regenerate, (our general contractor) pays taxes to the (Navajo) Nation and it comes back to the community. So we generated this year about a half-million dollars for the community because of our project" (president). A tribal elder concurred, "Whatever money we get we are very grateful for, because it makes the community larger and provides jobs." The community also benefits from having a college that is closely connected to its needs and can support a positive direction of community growth. Through quarterly reviews of federal and state employment and economic reports, the college strives to predict the educational needs of the community in an attempt to prepare members for new trends and opportunities.

### Major Impacts of Campaign Sii Ha Sin

- Leveraged other building funds
- Increased demand for college services
- Doubled enrollment
- Increased student extracurricular activities
- Increased community pride

The campaign also had a marked impact on CIT's ability to seek new funds. The college is now managing large-scale grants from federal departments such as U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The windfall of funds was leveraged directly by campaign funds or by the construction successes the college demonstrated. "We saw a sense of confidence from the federal side, having come here and reviewed what we did with very little money," the president surmised. "(The campaign was) seed monies. It's not really complicated to request money from funders (once they know you will perform) and they are very willing to become partners."

Despite these successes, CIT still needs to increase classroom space and add technology enhancements and programs. The telephone lines to the college are currently maximized, and CIT was only able to provide two phone lines in the new student housing complexes. The college is pursing a distance learning option that would connect it to Northern Arizona University's system, but its remote location on the reservation makes reception impossible unless the towers on the reservation are raised, which would entail considerable cost. CIT also lacks positive recreational and social opportunities for its student body, extracurricular activities such as music and sports, and the facilities to house these campus enhancements.

With the new campus rapidly rising from the desert, college staff and students sense a new era for CIT. The college exhibits hope and excitement for education as it completes its self-study to receive initial candidacy with the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association. In the words of a board member, "We are at the tail end of our self-study… but it's only the beginning."

## Conclusion

The campaign provided the means for Crownpoint Institute of Technology to complete the first phase of the college's master plan and leverage new funds to continue campus development. As a result, enrollment has more than doubled and the community has come to view the campus as a central institution and resource.

# Fort Peck Community College: Expanding Influence

In just two years, Fort Peck Community College (FPCC) in Poplar, Montana, built a cultural center, remodeled a multipurpose building and has broken ground on a new satellite campus to serve formerly isolated residents of the reservation. The new buildings have already created momentum on the campus. The multipurpose building offers student services, administration, teachers and students a place to interact on an informal basis. Student participation in campus activities, as well as student enrollment, has risen markedly since the construction was completed. The new buildings, particularly the new cultural learning center, have increased community pride and solidified the college's central presence in the community. As one FPCC staff noted, "It is surprising what a building can do."

## History of FPCC's Expansion and Facilities

Founded in 1978 by the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux tribes, the Fort Peck Community College initially occupied an old Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schoolhouse when it began to serve the educational needs of the community. Long-time FPCC staff members remember the small building and the struggle to bring higher education to tribal members who chose not to leave their homeland. The president of FPCC recalled, "I shared an office (in the old BIA schoolhouse) with two other people for the first three years I was here. We had one little doublewide trailer (for classes) in the back. I went downtown where I knew the local banker and I borrowed $50,000 and built that first classroom building." Like other tribal colleges, the humble beginnings of the college signified the dedication of tribal members to bring culturally appropriate education to the Fort Peck reservation tribes.

FPCC continued to expand over the next 25 years, but not without struggle. Financially, the college was sorely under funded. It also struggled to gain the acknowledgement and respect of its community. However, the needs of students and the impact of the college on their lives was proof positive of the need for the college.

FPCC alumni, the majority of whom are women, exemplified dedication in obtaining their educations. Many juggled family responsibilities and work while they attended college, traveling many miles to attended classes and receive their degree. One FPCC graduate recalled:

*"When I came to school here I was about 26 years old and I had six children at home, newborn up to age 9. … One of my friends told me we should take classes together. I was like 'yeah right,' so one day I walked into the door, I don't know what got into me. … They registered me full time and I walked out thinking 'I am going to flunk and be so ashamed' and I went home and was crying thinking, 'what did I get myself into?' I can say that after my first day of class, I probably never missed. It changed my life; it changed my kids' lives. I am now working on my master's degree."*

However, the college's financial struggles, visible in its small campus and old buildings, did not make FPCC a top choice among younger students. Student enrollment continued to increase, but the tribe as a whole expressed ambivalence toward the college. The tribal community desired an institution that was comparable to other institutions, but FPCC's outdated buildings and limited course offerings compromised the comparison. A member of the board of directors recalled:

"It was real hard for us because the local community, well, we were our worst enemies in which we thought… 'How are we going to be a college?' Is this another operation where the tribes say, 'This is what I am' but people don't really believe it? We struggled with that. … It's part of being accepted and people need to feel comfortable that the value of what you are giving them with the product we were selling has to have value. Until the local people found value in (what we offered), they weren't going to send their kids."

The value of FPCC in the eyes of the community increased as the college expanded teaching efforts and courses offered. It became a center for cultural retention and learning, and in this it found its niche. For many, the college was the first formal training students received about the depth and complexity of the Assiniboine and Sioux cultures. Comments such as "I got my first honest introduction to Native Americans and our history as a people when I attended college here" are not uncommon among FPCC graduates. Further value was added when the college was granted accreditation in 1991. The tribal commission supported the college, in word and in dollars, and the college, in turn, offered its services to help the council meet its goals and to "show the community that we are the community and that we have to be able to work with everybody whether we like their issue or not" (member of the board of directors). FPCC's family support model to education, which has become the cornerstone of FPCC's approach to education, made the college accessible to a community that highly valued family. The family support model reconciles the traditional needs of the family with the educational needs of the individual. "We need to make sure the family is involved and they are supportive in that they realize that they may have to sacrifice for this amount of time but this is what is going to happen in the end. … When we bring the family in it gives them a sense of 'I am doing something too' " (financial aid). In these ways, the college represented a major departure from non-Indian colleges.

As the college grew, it began to take a more autonomous role in the community, defining not only the direction of the institution, but of the tribe as well.[20] FPCC began to look strategically at the courses it provided and when an opportunity arose, it provided courses to meet the need. As the college separated from the tribal council and became financially stable, the council ceased contributing financially to the college's general funds. "It hurt for a little while, but now we have been able to recover from that and that makes us more autonomous" (dean of students).

20 A recent example of the role of the college is a government-sponsored 10-year project to build a $200 million water pipeline that will bring water to 25,000-30,000 people in this region. The college added survey courses and other classes to provide local people with training. They also proactively direct tribal members to new opportunities through an entrepreneurial program that helps individuals devise business plans and navigate the sometimes-treacherous ground between capitalism and Native culture.

The college expanded through fits and starts, most commonly paying for facilities expansion through loans, Tribal Community College Act funds and expropriating money from the general fund. Occasionally, FPCC received a donated building from local residents or by taking over abandoned buildings, such as the old post office. Slowly, with accreditation and building new facilities with equipment equal to other higher learning institutions, the college has come to be seen by the reservation and surrounding communities as a legitimate and desirable college. However, the college began to experience growing pains, as student needs outstripped college resources. Student services were spread out and, consequently, communication between administrative staff was at times difficult. Furthermore, its location in the center of the 110- by 40-mile Fort Peck reservation was difficult for many tribal residents to access. One FPCC staff shared, "Our Wolf Point students have a harder time because they have to come 22 miles everyday and it costs them more to come to class. … Frasier (a town at the far west end of the reservation) students have to come 100 miles round trip everyday. Think of the cost of that!" Staff and students recalled borrowing cars, hitching rides and walking miles to school. Despite the fact that the college often provided gas vouchers and meals for students coming from the far reaches of the reservation, the increased need for facilities expansion required growth that was not easily afforded by the still struggling college.

With the growing needs of the student population in mind, FPCC developed a five-year building campaign for campus involvement, spurred by a number of community programs that were now coming to the college. The need for more classrooms, an auditorium, administration offices and a Wolf Point campus were apparent. Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds provided the opportunity to address the main needs of the college and provide growth opportunities for years to come.

## Overview of FPCC's Campaign Sii Ha Sin-Funded Projects

For the last decade, FPCC has developed and maintained a five-year building campaign for its facilities. For years, the college pieced together loans, donations and limited grants to cover the costs of construction and facilities improvement. Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds offered the first opportunity to engage in a large concentrated construction project and significantly expand and improve the campus. FPCC used the funding for three projects, two on the main campus in Poplar, and one to develop a stronger presence in Wolf Point.

Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds provided the college the luxury of a critical choice—whether to move to a new location and start anew or stay in the center of Poplar. The college firmly decided to stay in Poplar to be a central presence to the community and a reminder of the educational successes of the tribe. "Because, to be a community college, in our opinion, you need to be in the center of the community. You need to be the focal point" (member of the board of directors).

### Campaign Sii Ha Sin Overview

- Complete the cultural center
- Refurbish the multipurpose building
- Construct a new Wolf Point campus building

The college first used Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds for its original intent, to complete the cultural center. College officials shared that despite the fact that the materials were donated to the college, they would not have been able to afford the extra costs necessary to complete the center. The center has had a major impact on the college and has been a benefit to the community. "I think… it almost gives (the community) a sense of ownership," a FPCC staff member noted. "We can show people what we can do, you go in there and there is artwork from people that I didn't even know were artists." A number of respondents also noted that visitors to the reservation now stop and learn more about the culture and the people of Fort Peck. As more funds became available, FPCC embarked on a multipurpose building and auditorium across the street from the cultural center and, later, the Wolf Point satellite campus.

The Wolf Point campus presented some difficulties to the college and an unexpected opportunity to build a bridge between the Indian and non-Indian community. Initially, when the college presented to the city commissioners the idea of building a satellite campus in Wolf Point to serve the west end of the reservation, the commissioners underlined the tension between the local non-Indian and Indian populations by declining the offer. However, a determined FPCC began what one college official called an "underground publicity campaign" to inform the community of the commissioners' decision.

A member of the board of directors shared, "Our main responsibility in this institution is to preserve the history and the culture and the traditions of the Assiniboine tribe. … That is what makes us unique, I believe, and we look at that as an opportunity because the only way you change people's attitudes about minorities is through education."

Once Wolf Point's business community heard of FPCC's declined offer, and consequently realized the lost opportunity to capitalize on more students coming though Wolf Point, they pressured the commissioners to reverse their decision. The commissioners not only reversed their decision, but also sweetened the deal by gift-deeding the land for the campus and footing the $20,000 bill to tear down the existing buildings. At the groundbreaking ceremony, both Indians and non-Indians came together to see the beginning of that historic joint effort. The ceremony marked not only the new building, but a change in attitude about FPCC and the Indian community: "Now the attitude in the non-Indian community is, if it is something the college is doing, it is going to be successful" (member of the board of directors).

Overall, construction was, and continues to be, fairly smooth for FPCC. Its rule of thumb is to not embark on any construction until a majority of the funding is in place, which the Fund provided. Then, as it builds, FPCC actively seeks money to complete the project. The construction jobs were initially put out to bid, but when they came back too high, the college decided to sole source the contract to the architect and then work with the architect to develop a workforce that was primarily students and local Indian subcontractors. However, there were some initial glitches in the construction project due to the way the use of Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds was originally envisioned. The Fund originally envisioned that any donations, such as furnaces or windows, would be provided to all tribal colleges. In the event that the donations were not available to a particular college due to delivery routes or project specifics, the college could recoup the amount of the donation opportunity at the end of the project. This issue was soon smoothed out and did not present a difficulty for the multipurpose building or the Wolf Point campus.

With Campaign Sii Ha Sin's funding secured, FPCC used the funding to acquire additional federal funding. This acquired federal funding opened new capacity building opportunities to the college that will serve it well in future grant seeking. Some of the federal funding sources had spend-down times, requiring the college to jump the hurdles of environmental and historical reviews, ordering materials or completing work in prescribed time periods. The college was very pleased with the Fund's flexibility as new funding opportunities were available: "If we get another funding opportunity, (the Fund's money) can sit there a little bit longer and the Fund can draw a little bit more interest… (and) we can still access that money six months from now" (facilities manager). FPCC plans to complete the Wolf Point campus with the assistance of loans in 2003.

## New Directions

The improvements to and extension of the campus have resulted in a number of positive new directions for the college. The president shared that the importance of a physically attractive, well-constructed and well-equipped campus cannot be understated:

*"There has been a tremendous impact. If you see somebody drive up in a Cadillac you automatically assign more quality to that person than somebody who drives up in a beat- up Ford with one headlight. When, in fact, of the two people, the person driving the beat up old Ford may be a higher quality person than the one driving the Cadillac. But perceptions guide the way people think. Since we have opened this building, it is remarkable how it has changed the perception of the community about the quality of services that we offer, even though our quality has always been high and there hasn't been any significant change. The perception is that we have changed tremendously."*

The students and the larger community expressed a level of pride and confidence in their learning institution that did not exist to the same extent prior to Campaign Sii Ha Sin. When the multipurpose building was completed, the college invited the community to see the changes. A college staff person (financial aid) remembered:

*"You should have seen the amazed look! I was here when we had our first activity (in the new auditorium), a community feed for veterans, and you should have seen the people coming in here… they were amazed and they came in and we were all proud of it. We said, 'Come on and see what we did.' It just brings people back together. I think for a lot of years we had lost that sense of community."*

The impact of the new construction projects on students and college services is already apparent. Before the new building, notices for funding announcements were posted in Old Main, which was out of the way for many students. As a result, student services struggled to make students aware of scholarship and grant opportunities. Furthermore, financial aid staff noted that Indian students must often be encouraged to apply for grants that seem unattainable, but ironically often go unclaimed because no one applies. Now the notices are posted in the multipurpose building where most of the students frequent. As a result, financial aid staff can informally network with students and encourage them to make use of the opportunities.

Student involvement in extracurricular activities also has increased. FPCC staff observed that with the new building, "the groups seem to have a sense of belonging. Before we would struggle every year to get the Indian Club going… and they would peter along until November and they would start a month of activities and they would peter off again. Now they are just strong, they just grow. We have no problem getting people to sign up" (financial aid).

### Major Impacts of Campaign Sii Ha Sin

- Improved the college's reputation, within and outside of reservation
- Increased enrollment
- Increased retention
- Attracted younger students
- Improved student relations and access to information
- Renewed student population energy and engagement
- Increased community pride

Another tangible impact is that student enrollment has increased since the new construction was completed. The dean of students noted that, "(Traditionally, our student base was) 32 to 35-year-old Indian females with 2.4 children and no appreciable skills. Now, (the student population) is getting younger, it is getting more sophisticated, and obtaining more degrees." With the increase in room, services and a strong physical presence in the community, word spread that the college was a success and a desirable place to attend. "We are able to retain more students now because we have more places to meet with them. We have more reasons to give them to stay in school—better technology now, better presentation for our courses" (student services). With the completion of the Wolf Point campus in 2003, the college anticipates even more of an increase in enrollment.

With the success of Campaign Sii Ha Sin construction projects almost behind them, FPCC is looking forward to further work with renewed energy. College staff and students have recognized the pressing needs of daycare, housing, arts and humanities programming, and the facilities to sponsor intramural sports. Students, buoyed by the energy created during the construction project, have put forth an initiative to make FPCC a pedestrian campus. "That is their proposal, but they see it as a need to beautify their campus and to make it a safe place," the dean of students shared. "It is a safe place now, but of course with the new image we have issues of security, management and maintenance." The plans to expand are on the table, and although FPCC has not secured funding to take on the project, "We are going to continue to nickel and dime ourselves… we can't stop and say, 'oh, we are worn out now.' The expectations have been raised a lot" (member of the board of directors).

## Conclusion

In just two years, Fort Peck Community College has greatly expanded its campus and its students' opportunities. Like other tribal colleges, FPCC struggled to make ends meet for the quarter of a century of its existence. The results of construction funded by Campaign Sii Ha Sin have and will continue to make a major impact on FPCC's ability to meet the growing needs of the Fort Peck community.

# Institute of American Indian Arts: Rebuilding a Legacy

Established 40 years ago as the only institute solely dedicated to the preservation and promotion of American Indian arts, the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) is exemplary of Native institutions' struggles for self-realization and determination. Started as an extension of the federal boarding school system, IAIA became the nucleus of the Contemporary Indian Art Movement. However, the loss of its original facilities almost destroyed this important institution. Now, with help from Campaign Sii Ha Sin, the institute is rebuilding its presence with a new campus and a new generation of artists.

## History of IAIA's Expansion and Facilities

The history of the Institute of American Indian Arts' inception, expansion, near collapse and revitalization is exemplary of the importance of quality facilities for college success. It is also an example of the struggles associated with establishing an Indian institution. IAIA was initially established by executive order of the U.S. president in 1962. Unlike many tribal colleges that began through the grassroots efforts of a specific tribe seeking self-determination, the school began as an extension of the federal government's Indian boarding school system and initially operated as a high school program under the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) with a post-secondary certificate program. The school was the first of its kind, providing a nurturing environment to support the creative process and help American Indians develop their own artistic standards and build empowerment. "It is a safe place for us," one alumnus recalled. "It was the first time I have not felt like a minority. It was the first time I felt empowered as a Native American."

By the middle of the 1970s, the school discontinued its high school program to focus fully on its accreditation as a fine arts college. During this decade, the college developed the foundation for the Contemporary Indian Arts Movement and students' award-winning work brought acclaim to the college. The college became well known and a major contributor to artistic and tribal identity creation. One alumnus recalled:

*"(Attending IAIA) was probably the best move I made at the time. I had a really bad identity problem as a kid because of the prejudice around North Dakota—you are always considered a dirty Indian no matter where you went… When I came here I took this course called Art Indian History… I was very amazed at the culture that I read about and we discussed it in class and we had a lot of projects around the culture of various tribes in the U.S. and that helped me tremendously. But I think what helped me mostly were the other students… they made me feel good to be an Indian because they were proud of being an Indian."*

This period was marked by major shows and exhibitions that brought IAIA into the national spotlight. For example, during this period, the Kennedy Center hosted an IAIA faculty exhibit in 1973, IAIA students performed at the Super Bowl in 1977, and various dignitaries visited the campus.

Yet, in early 1980, a congressional act turned over the Santa Fe Indian School campus that housed IAIA to the All Indian Pueblo Council to develop a Pueblo high school. And although IAIA quickly found and leased abandoned World War II barracks and buildings from the College of Santa Fe, the move, described as demoralizing by many, had a negative impact on student enrollment, budgets and even faculty and college leadership retention. "It was a real harsh, depressing situation," a faculty member recalled. "Water froze in the photo room, there were mice and rodents in the dark room, dust and structural problems everywhere. When I went to school we had new equipment and the pride of the building showed in our work." Alumni of that time recalled the shortage of funding for materials and digging through plywood remnants outside of the Santa Fe Community College for palettes and canvases. "I was the garbage dump checker-outer everyday, (just to find) anything to paint on" (alumnus). Throughout the 1980s, the deplorable facilities and the lack of financial support for materials and tools reflected in the artwork of the students: "The art work was very depressing—it was an expression of where they were at the time" (college official). Indeed, the quality of the facilities was such that the college was put on accreditation probation and the college was in what one board member characterized as a "slow death spiral."

IAIA received an unexpected boost in 1993 when a local development company gifted the college 140 acres of undeveloped land outside of Santa Fe. The land was given with the condition that IAIA would develop it in five years. To accomplish this, the college developed a master plan with the intention of using IAIA's $6 million congressional appropriations for campus building. However, these appropriations could not be used until utilities and roads were in place and the price tag for developing the desert was steep: extending the road to the main gates of the campus cost more than $1 million and a water line cost approximately $700,000. In addition to the cost, the college encountered further challenges as the city and county government were opposed to new desert development. "It was difficult to really move ahead at the time because of the (scope of the) master plan and the amount of money we had in the bank and the undeveloped land" (facilities manager). Approximately $2 million was allocated toward these infrastructure improvements, but while the college was still at the Santa Fe Community College these improvements were not inspiring to students, faculty or donors. Enrollment continued to decline.

By 1997, the college, still working to raise enough funds to cover the cost of the master plan, was notified that federal appropriations were to be reduced and the school would no longer receive appropriations after 1999. The college responded by reducing staff and canceling classes. Adding to the pressure, IAIA's lease from the College of Santa Fe was coming up and the

college was not interested in renewing it. "After the roadway and waterlines were developed, the budget cuts came and things didn't look too good. We were looking ready to dismantle" (facilities manager). IAIA's board was faced with the ultimate question: close the college or take the leap of faith and dedicate all existing resources toward only a portion of the master plan. After looking at other options, including the consideration of a patchwork campus of conferencing centers and motels, the college decided to develop a scaled-down version of the master plan. By all accounts, it was a gamble: "(If we were unsuccessful in the build out) we would have lost the 140 acres plus the $2 million invested, plus the $6 million (of congressional appropriations) in the bank, plus the intangible: the vision and dreams and heart of the Institute" (facilities manager).

IAIA was then left with the daunting task of where to begin with construction at a time when "bricks and mortar are not fashionable to fund anymore" (member of the board of directors). IAIA students were from many reservations and because of the high cost of housing in Santa Fe, the need for housing was paramount. Yet, the college also desperately needed classroom and studio space. With a planning grant from the Kellogg Foundation through the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), the college prioritized sections of the master plan, contemporizing it to accommodate current funding and time constraints. Then, Campaign Sii Ha Sin provided the needed boost for IAIA with the funding to complete the first structure on the new campus.

## Overview of IAIA's Campaign Sii Ha Sin-Funded Projects

The funds provided by the campaign were called a "shot in the arm" for the life of the college. "The campaign came at a critical point," IAIA's president recalled. "We had budget cuts that would have shut us down, but this gave us the encouragement to move forward." By using the campaign's promise of $3 million, the college developed a fund-raising plan that targeted the private sector, the state and other specific groups. "Without the campaign, we wouldn't be able to leverage the funds we needed. People were impressed that we had this amount of funding and they believed in us" (president). Like other tribal colleges, IAIA staff felt that the technical assistance offered by the American Indian College Fund was useful: "The technical assistance was necessary and the process was beneficial for us. It made us prioritize our needs and become realistic in how the resources could be used" (college official).

The funds were first used to build the cultural center hogan[21]. The construction of the cultural center established not only physical evidence that the campus could become a reality, but also an opportunity to heal the wounds opened by the decade of lost funding, cutbacks and fractured dreams. IAIA's president recollected, "In March of 1999, we had a 'planting the seeds' ceremony to open the college and in May, we had a hogan raising. It was the first building on the campus, and it revitalized our belief that the campus could be restored." Board members, faculty and students built the hogan together as both a symbolic and real commitment to rebuilding the college.

### Campaign Sii Ha Sin Overview

- Begin realization of master plan
- Cultural center
- Multipurpose academic center

The campaign then allowed IAIA to embark on the development of the original master plan. The college broke the master plan into multiple phases and sub-phases to create momentum and a shared sense of success as mini-phases were completed. The campus was begun with a 26-unit student housing center and a multipurpose academic center. The buildings are configured around a circle, centered around the powerful symbol of the circle shared by many American Indian cultures, with the entrance on the east. The college contracted Flintco Constructive Solutions, the largest Indian-owned construction firm in the United States, to build the campus. The campus was developed through a design/build method that reduced the contracting process to Flintco as the sole contractor to the campus. This design/build method ensured that one contractor was responsible for the building and could capitalize on the economies of scale through understanding the overall construction plan.

An exceptional element of IAIA's construction process that many other tribal colleges have not been able to accomplish was that the campus was developed on a cash basis. Aware of the burdens associated with loans, the college opted to only build what it was able to afford outright. According to the facilities manager:

21 A one-room Navajo structure traditionally built with the entrance facing east, used as a dwelling or for ceremonial purposes.

*"It may not be unique in the tribal college world, but we basically developed everything we have on a cash basis. That is unheard of in the corporate world. (Usually institutions) take out loans and bonds, the cities and municipalities have bonding capacity, even the public school districts are always doing taxes and bonds for new constructions. We don't have that so we have to build this on a cash basis. It is unique and it shows strength and fortitude."*

Within 14 months, IAIA's campus was developed from a road to the main gates and underground utilities, to four stand-alone buildings equaling 75,000 square feet of classrooms, housing and offices. Because these buildings are only one-third of the final envisioned campus, much of what the space was initially and ultimately designed for is occupied by other campus functions. For example, the college's cafeteria occupies what was designed to be the student lounge and the library occupies what will be offices and classroom space. Yet the momentum created by the campaign propelled the college into further growth associated with the master plan and unanticipated opportunities for fulfilling the college's goal of enhancing knowledge and understanding of Native American and Alaska Native cultural traditions and traditional and contemporary Native art.

## New Directions

The campaign was the impetus for the creation of a new campus, renewed interest and excitement about IAIA, and further building and expansion of the college. Indeed, the campaign allowed the college to embark on one of the most extensive fund-raising initiatives ever undertaken by an Indian institution. The campus is becoming a point of pride for students, alumni and college faculty and staff. "Now we can market the school. Before (the construction of the new campus), all of the colleges we competed with (for students sent) pictures of their campuses (to potential students). Because of our deplorable conditions, we couldn't and (as a result) students would get here and feel bad. The facilities were so depressing. Now we're able to market ourselves. We have many visitors, even from other countries, and we get requests from tribal organizations to use the cultural learning center for meetings" (IAIA president).

### Major Impacts of Campaign Sii Ha Sin

- Development of a new campus
- Leveraged other building funds
- Awarded the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's first national Lifelong Learning Center for Native Americans

The new campus also changed the way students and faculty use the facilities. The library, previously at the College of Santa Fe, suffered from an energy source that could not support the copy machine and the lights at the same time. Now the library is a meeting place for students and they line up at 7:30 in the morning to use the facilities, the books and the archives. Faculty noted that student artwork has also changed to become more "inspirational" and students are able to focus on their personal development instead of the conditions in which they live. Perhaps the most important impact for the college is the creation of community: "Having our own facilities, we have pride and ownership instead of a complex that was temporary," a college official noted. "We've created a community here. The students use the hogan for (poetry readings and music) and to be together as a unit. They're guiding each other to come out of their shells… that is what I love, seeing individuals grow."

The new buildings have already had a profound effect on current students. As one student shared, "the development I have witnessed keeps me hopeful, faithful that successive generations of IAIA students will come to IAIA knowing that the site and the structures are representations of profound sacrifice, artistic and social struggle, survival and love." The pride of the art and the surroundings was evident in how current students talked about their institution. Students appreciated the studio space and surroundings, saying "when you're here, you're family, you're part of the earth" (current student). Most students realized that the college is in a reconstruction phase and were proud to be part of a legacy of IAIA. However, students were also impatient for the expansion of the college's offerings, studio space and materials.

By establishing itself as a campus and showing the community its steadfastness, IAIA expanded its community presence both locally and nationally. "(The campaign) got us out of survival mode to think about what we can become" (member of the board of directors). The college developed a business council composed of local business owners to garner support for an emergency fund. This fund can be used by students to return home for a family emergency, for childcare and other needs, or for school-related costs. In return, the community of Santa Fe benefits from a strong institution that develops Indian artistic talent that brings in tourists and dollars to the larger community. Another indicator of IAIA's growing presence is the possibility of establishing branch campuses in partnership with the Anchorage Native American Center and the Eastern Band of Cherokees.

The new campus also has been proof positive of the IAIA's progress to funders. "Our credibility has gone from nil or nonexistent in the late 1990s to a point of prominence" (college official). Soon after the campaign was started, IAIA secured a $1.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Program and additional funds from the state of New Mexico, HUD and local foundations to develop a library and technology center. This building, currently under construction, will complete the first phase of the master plan. In fact, the master plan is now moving much faster than anticipated, and if funding continues at the current level, the campus will be completed in the next five years. This rapid growth is important to the college, given the turnaround it has experienced and the necessity as an institution to establish itself in the Native American and larger artistic community.

Perhaps the greatest achievement the campaign has contributed to was that IAIA, because of its presence, was awarded the site of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's first national Lifelong Learning Center for Native Americans (LLC). The LLC will expand IAIA's work to preserve, support and revitalize evolving forms of Indian art and culture. Like the college itself, the LLC will employ traditional indigenous methods of teaching and learning. The LLC, projected to cost over $20 million, has once again put IAIA on the radar screen of foundations, private donors, the state and the U.S. Congress.

Despite these new opportunities for growth and expansion, the institute still struggles to increase its enrollment. Although enrollment has doubled since it hit its lowest point, and the average age of students has dropped from 29 to 24 years old, IAIA has not yet experienced the jump in enrollment that other colleges have after their construction projects. "We're rebuilding and adding new programs. And we've seen a lot of doubt and tribal communities still think IAIA shut down" (college official). The establishment of fine arts programs at other tribal colleges and IAIA's tuition costs also impacted enrollment.

The college accepted these challenges when it plunged into building a new campus. Although it may be years until the college is completed and the Indian and general populations' perceptions of IAIA have totally changed, the college is well on its way to institutional self-sufficiency and success. Although the campus has changed, the perspective and goals have remained the same. According to a current student:

"Growth and self-sufficiency are our directives. Tools made available by state and government agencies, foundations, individuals and the American Indian College Fund are our means, but before all of this, we as Indian students, as students of our larger global community, must come to a new understanding of our roles as artists, as preservers of a rich culture, not dead or dying, but at risk of becoming a culture, forever, seen through lenses not our own."

## Conclusion

With dedication and the help of the campaign, the Institute of American Indian Arts turned the college from a faltering institution to a college gaining national standing with students, communities and funders. The new campus provides an inspiring environment to create both art and an identity as autonomous tribal peoples.

# College of Menominee Nation: Sustaining Growth

Surrounded by the Menominee Forest on the southern edge of the Menominee reservation, the College of Menominee Nation is testament to the resiliency and dedication of the Menominee people to thrive as a sovereign nation and as a contributor to the larger community. In the last 10 years, the college evolved from classes held in a professor's living room to a college campus striving to meet the needs of a growing student population. Campaign Sii Ha Sin played a critical role in building the college to address its growing needs.

## History of CMN's Expansion and Facilities

The history of the College of Menominee Nation (CMN) is part of a more complex story of the Menominee tribe's struggle for self-determination. In 1954, as part of the federal government's goal to assimilate tribal peoples, the government terminated the Menominee Nation's federal trust status. In the words of one college official, during the years from 1961 to 1973, the tribe suffered "a loss of identify and a sense of belonging. (Those) years of loss were devastating to the social identity as a tribe, a people and a culture." After the 1973 restoration of its trust status, the Menominee tribe undertook a number of activities to buttress its cultural, social, economic and institutional infrastructure by adopting a new constitution and establishing a Menominee Indian School District and the first Indian-owned and operated health facility in the United States. It was not until 20 years after trust restoration, when the tribe's main infrastructure and support systems were established, that the vision of a tribal college was realized.

The tribal college, established in 1993, recognized the importance of a college that promoted Menominee values and ensured a quality education to move tribal members toward self-sufficiency. "We need to build… our college so our people become better educated so that we can build services here on our reservation so that we don't have to go off (reservation. We need to) keep our monies here" (alumnus). Like other tribal colleges, CMN began humbly—the first classes were held in the founding president's home and then migrated to different community centers, such as the high school. Unlike many tribal colleges, this period was short-lived. Upon establishment, the college was immediately gifted land by the tribe and the first building was constructed a year later with tribal funds. The tribe realized that "offering education to our people will help them with the analytical skills and confidence to express themselves, take issue with things, and dare to have other creative ideas. … Confidence and self-esteem are big issues in Indian Country. Since this college was initiated, there's been a major turnaround. It's immeasurable what it does to a person's image" (college official).

CMN was initially envisioned to provide quality higher education opportunities for 150 to 200 students, but this benchmark was quickly surpassed. The rapid increase is in part due to the tribal college's pedagogical approach: for the first time, Indian students attended an Indian-run college that promoted their Indian culture while simultaneously preparing them for entrance into the non-Indian world. Echoing a decade of students, a current student reflected, "This institution is more than just a higher ed institution, it's a family. Some students have the opportunity to strive for the first time." As time passed, non-Indian students also began attending the college in greater numbers. The rapid growth in enrollment, from 47 students in its first semester to nearly 400 in 1999, strained CMN's infrastructure capacity. One faculty member recalled, "We needed a building so bad and we filled it up so fast. Students literally sat in the hall or in their car (waiting for their class to begin)." This increase in enrollment also put a strain on the administrative and student support services necessary for CMN to run effectively. Support staff recalled that administrative offices were frequently relinquished for classroom space. "Right off the bat, space was an issue. … I used to go home to work."

To accommodate this growth in enrollment, the main building was expanded in 1999 to provide space for a library, administrative functions and classrooms. Quickly, that space was consumed by new classes and the college again struggled to keep pace with the growing expectations of the surrounding community. To meet part of this demand, CMN established auxiliary sites in 1997 (Stockbridge-Munsee Site-Bowler) and 2000 (Oneida Site-Green Bay) to respond to the off-reservation community needs. The dean of students reflected, "We have to have space. Growth is a wonderful problem, but if there is no space for classrooms, students won't come. Students have certain expectations (about space and facilities) and we need to address them. … We can't grow if there's no infrastructure and capital funding sources are difficult to come by."

Like other colleges, financing this rapid growth has been a struggle. "The biggest challenge is infrastructure," a development officer shared. "Capital dollars are often limited, but our needs are not limited. … We often try to identify a model to help us project our growth, but our reality outruns our projections on a daily basis… and keeping up with this growth puts a tremendous strain on resources." The tribe's casino, opened in the early 1980s, provides a revenue source to assist in maintaining the reservation's infrastructure needs. However, the college is only one of the many services that requests and requires the financial support of the casino and the tribe. Roads, housing, health and social services are all critical needs for the reservation and contend for these limited funds.

The tribal support of CMN is critical given the low level of support the college receives from the state. CMN, designated as a "1994 land grant institute," currently receives approximately 8 percent of its primary revenue sources from the state of Wisconsin.[22] However, other state-funded schools of Wisconsin-Madison's total budget is funded with state taxes.[23] As a result, CMN continues to support students with fewer dollars than most other state colleges and universities. Furthermore, the federal dollars received for the administrative costs of education of full-time enrolled American Indian

22 College of Menominee Nation: Institutional Self-Study Report. Dr. Verna Fowler: 1993, 78.

23 http://www.staterelations.wisc.edu/view.php?get=faq

students do not cover the costs of the increasing non-Indian student population. In the spring of 2003, approximately 80% of the student population was American Indian and 20% was white/non-Hispanic.[24]. Yet CMN provides a vital and growing educational resource for the surrounding community and views non-Indian enrollment as an opportunity to promote cross-cultural learning and understanding. "(Non-Native students) understand when they come here that they will learn Menominee history and language," a tribal college official asserted. "It's an opportunity to educate the larger population, and in a global world you're better off with that knowledge."

Despite the additions CMN was able to provide on its own, the dire need for classroom and lab space, in addition to the growing needs for space for support systems such as student services and administration, pressed on the college. The growing student population outpaced the tribe's financial ability to finance CMN's expansion. It was at this juncture that the Fund's Campaign Sii Ha Sin was announced to the college.

## Overview of CMN's Campaign Sii Ha Sin-Funded Projects

When news of Campaign Sii Ha Sin was announced, CMN immediately began to discuss the possibilities that could be pursued with the anticipated funding. The first priority was to build a cultural center. Planning for the center began in 1999 and reflects the college's community orientation. Using the project as a learning opportunity, the instructors worked with nine Indian high school students, identified by their teachers as "problematic," to assist in the development of the blueprints. Through this process, the youth learned discipline and respect and, after participating in the project, their attendance increased (seven of the nine students had perfect attendance in school during and after participating in this process). CMN students then helped construct the building.

### Campaign Sii Ha Sin Overview

- Cultural center
- Main classroom facility expansion.
- Contributed to a new student commons, water and sanitation systems, and a parking lot

The main portion of the campaign funds was used to add on yet again to the main classroom facility and expand it to include four classrooms with integrated computer technology and an atrium for student social space. Like all recent construction projects, the college followed all state building codes to ensure safety, accessibility and durability, and then revisited older buildings to bring them up to code. CMN also used the funds to leverage a number of different public grants to expand and improve the campus. It leveraged the largest grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for a new student commons (still under construction at the time of this writing). Other smaller projects that Campaign Sii Ha Sin leveraged include new water and sanitation, supported by a grant from USDA, and a parking lot.

CMN initiated a structured bidding process in which it posted the construction project announcement in three trade journals and accepted a minimum of three bids. The construction workforce was 100% American Indian, and the pride the workers expressed toward building a facility that was exclusively owned and operated by the Menominee tribe was evident.

24 College of Menominee Nation: Institutional Self-Study Report. Dr. Verna Fowler: 1993, update to the 2003 Institutional Self Study page 6.

One construction worker, a single mother and CNM graduate formerly on welfare, said "It was really wonderful to come back to where I started. … I am proud because I got the education, and if it wasn't for this college I don't think that I would be where I am today." Another of the tribal contractors donated half of its contract back to CMN.

CMN staff who worked closely with the Fund said that the process was relatively easy and not burdensome. In fact, one college official even stated, "I admire them. They are one of the best Indian organizations in the world." Unlike USDA and HUD that often require communications with multiple individuals, the Fund assigned one person to provide close personal communication with the college. This was a relief for college staff because, although the staff is adept at negotiating complex grants, it is often difficult for an institution with limited funds and staffing to meet requirements of large, bureaucratic construction processes. The only difficulty CMN faced in administering the campaign was the time gap between payment submitted to the Fund and receiving the check. Since the college did not have enough cash to pay contractors during this period, the college took out a line of credit.

## New Directions

In one week of 2003, the College of Menominee Nation celebrated its 10th anniversary, was visited by an accreditation team, and held a groundbreaking ceremony for the new student commons. These three activities mirror CMN's dedication to sustainability, pursuit of academic excellence and expansion of its facilities to accommodate increasing numbers of students. These build-outs continue to bolster the pride and energy of both staff and students alike. One of the most significant impacts of the construction projects was the increase in student interaction because of the atrium. "Students feel like it's more of a college now" (support staff). It facilitated not only student interaction, but also information dissemination about clubs, student life and financial assistance. A student support services staff member recalled, "Before the building was completed, we posted notes on our existing buildings and by e-mail. But now (with the new student space) we can get more information out and increase the opportunities for students." The attractive space is also now the proud visual centerpiece of the college, and CMN is using the new building in its brochures and postcards.

### Major Impacts of Campaign Sii Ha Sin

- Increased student interaction through shared social space
- Established a "home" for the Menominee Cultural Institute
- Increased enrollment
- The campus is a major meeting center for the tribal and surrounding community
- Leveraged other building funds

*"I learned a lot about who I am and who people are, and I grew up in Appleton, off the reservation. I went to a Catholic school and so I didn't really know anything about who I was. (By attending CMN) I really got an understanding about our language and it really changed my life about how I think our religion is, the history, the culture and the language. … I would really like to be a part of the preservation of that now. That is why I am still going to school. I want to become educated and help my people get that back. It is important to me and I want it to be important to my kids because that is who they are."*

The cultural center also has played an important function for both the college and the community. The cultural center is the home of the Menominee Cultural Institute. Founded shortly after the college's inception, the institute works to preserve and retain the Menominee culture that was nearly devastated during the period between termination and restoration. This provides not only a valuable service to the tribe at large, but for the individual success of students. Current and former students frequently commented that CMN helped them to not feel "lost" or "intimidated" and allowed them to explore educational opportunities in a supportive environment. An alumnus stated:

Tribal elders also noted that "people who would not have done (college) did it and said, 'I am somebody, I can go to school." Tribal elders also said that the opportunity to share their language helped preserve and further the culture. "We would talk and some of the words we lost would come back to us. In teaching the language, it's not just that, it's teaching the language and culture. Culture is something that goes along with the language, and you can't separate the two."

Tribal members and elders frequently referred to CMN as a central meeting place, where the community comes together to develop ties and collaborate for the collective development of the tribe. Indeed, the cultural center is the venue for brown-bag forums about community building, education, and development.

The community also expressed renewed appreciation for the tribal college. One tribal member attested, "The biggest human resource center is our college. We know the domino effect if we pull our college, so it's important that we see it grow." Indeed, CMN is the fourth-largest employer on the reservation and its resources make it an attractive partner to both the tribal

government and the larger community. The Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) located within the college is an example of the CMN's strong role in the economic development of the Menominee community. In keeping with CMN's land grant status, SDI is the primary delivery mechanism of the CMN's Research and Extension Service. However, beyond the orthodox land grant extension mission, which applies research in the community among individuals and individual farmsteads, SDI focuses its efforts on building the infrastructure of Indian Country by strengthening the institutional life of the reservation and the surrounding communities.

As capacity has grown, CMN has also actively increased its recruitment strategies to draw more youth and men to the college. The new and growing facilities, the college's current pursuit of continued accreditation, and the college tailoring classes to the communities' needs (such as highway work certification and pre-carpentry classrooms) make CMN attractive to these students. Indeed, enrollment as a whole has increased markedly since the campaign's construction (since the completion of the main building's expansion, the college has experienced a 34 percent increase in its student population in only one year). Already, this increased enrollment has made the existing space tight. In fact, despite the fact that the college already utilizes community facilities such as the area high school and Headstart and daycare facilities, the limited classroom space and increased numbers of students have created scheduling problems that have been addressed by scheduling shorter class times.

CMN now looks ahead to the increased expectations of the community. The college, commonly referred to as "the best kept secret" by case study interviewees, is no longer under wraps. CMN projects that enrollment will double during the next 10 years, requiring more classrooms, labs and support services. Indeed, the tribe's current population suggests future tribal growth (nearly 45 percent of the current Menominee population is under the age of 15) and the college is already looking forward to this emerging student population. Current students' comments such as "I was meant to be here, I belong here" and "I've already had success here, so seeing success in my future isn't unattainable" are testament to the high quality of education and support that will draw new students in. Additionally, CMN anticipates its non-Indian enrollment will balloon as Wisconsin considers capping enrollment at state schools. In all cases, the college plays and will continue to play an important role in the community's education of traditional and non-traditional, Indian and non-Indian students.

## Conclusion

The rapid growth during the last 10 years of the College of Menominee Nation greatly strained its existing facilities. The increase in Indian and non-Indian enrollment exhausted the financial resources of the college. Although the college was innovative in its fund raising, it will require additional funding support to meet the burgeoning needs and expectations of the tribe, the surrounding Native communities, and non-Indian students.

# Turtle Mountain Community College: Building on Success

In May 1999, the new Turtle Mountain Community College (TMCC) campus in Belcourt, North Dakota, was dedicated to the community, signifying a step toward the college's long-term vision to create an inclusive cultural and community learning center. The building is a marked departure from the old campus, which comprised a couple of buildings and trailers. The new 105,000-square-foot building includes classrooms, state-of-the-art labs, a gymnasium, library, and faculty and student services areas. The building is also a testament to American Indian sensibilities, including Chippewa/Ojibwa-specific designs and seven pillars at the entrance that represent the Seven Teachings of the Ojibwa. Now, TMCC has embarked on Phase II of the facilities improvement with the building of an auditorium and fine arts center, partially funded by the American Indian College Fund.

## History of TMCC's Expansion and Facilities

In 1972, TMCC began with a handful of abandoned buildings in central Belcourt and a core of dedicated tribal members. "When I first started going (to TMCC) there weren't even any classrooms," a TMCC graduate recalled. "We had to borrow space from the high school and the hospital… all over the community." For the first several years the college operated out of two offices on the third floor of an abandoned Catholic convent. It then operated out of an abandoned Indian Health Services facility and a former Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) building. It was on Belcourt's main street that TMCC was to purchase and renovate several old buildings and, as funding became available, build a series of modular-style buildings.

The college represented a move toward Indian-oriented pedagogy that built on American Indian strengths and a departure from western-oriented teachings that disavowed American Indian learning styles and needs. A tribal elder and former TMCC instructor recalled, "We couldn't get any support at all (when the college was started). But we knew that the teachers were understanding of the Native culture and because of that, they were able to (understand) the students better." A TMCC graduate reiterated the importance of a tribal school: "A lot of our Native American students are actually scared to go out there to a larger college. So they come here as a trial-and-error period, to see if they actually want to get that education and until they are secure in that environment."

However, not all of the Turtle Mountain community was dedicated to the idea of a tribal college that emphasized the Ojibwa culture. Further, TMCC's humble beginnings did not endear it to some community members. One former faculty member and tribal elder recalled that when she went to school, "(Community members) loved to make fun of us. They'd say 'Oh, she's going to work at that Mickey Mouse college'." Comments such as these underscore the challenges and internal struggles that the tribe, and by extension the college, faced. Like many Indian tribes that experienced several hundred years of European influences, the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa struggled to maintain its cultural identity.

Indeed, by the late 1960s, tribal members who practiced traditional ways had dwindled to only a small group. In response to cultural loss, TMCC took explicit measures to promote traditional Ojibwa practices in order to strengthen the tribe's cultural roots. To ensure the college's success as a higher educational institution and a center for cultural preservation, TMCC created a unique two-board governance structure that provides for checks and balances, autonomy and protection from tribal politics.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, TMCC continued to grow and provide educational and employment opportunities, soon becoming a major reservation economic and cultural force. Today, more than 40 percent of the staff are TMCC graduates. During this same period, the stigma that some community members associated with the traditional Ojibwa lifeways became less an issue and the college was sought by tribal members as a way to learn more about their traditional roots. A tribal elder reflected, "The college is the center for the culture and our young people are hungry for it." TMCC graduates agreed, "The college has really developed into a component of our cultural identity as to who we are. … Our high schools and elementary schools, they don't know what they should be teaching as far as our culture and language preservation. But the college is a stabilizing force… it is important for our preservation as a tribe." Indeed, most current and former TMCC students mentioned cultural teachings, self-confidence and personal growth in the same breath.

In the 1990s, TMCC expanded as an educational and cultural retention and revitalization institution and subsequently increased its role and influence in the community. In 1989, the Center for New Growth and Economic Development was created, and in 1995, was formalized with Kellogg Foundation financial backing. The center is a think tank and coordinator for supporting tribal business development and has embarked on several projects to enhance the community's ability to succeed and to provide more opportunity for the people living in the area. The center contributed to the TMCC's growth momentum as the center's successes brought more funding and developed a track record of successfully completed projects. With these successes under its belt, the college conceived a strategic plan to expand and develop the college. It included a large campus to be developed to the north of the existing campus, and would include state-of-the-art classrooms, a gymnasium and access to the latest technology, including Internet access, fiber optic cable connections and interactive video. This system would connect to each of North Dakota's tribal colleges and to the state university system.

When the proposal for a new campus was submitted to the community, it was passed but not without some concern among community members about the vision of the school, the Ojibwa-oriented teaching and the role of TMCC in directing the future of the tribe. As one college respondent shared, "Not everyone is in favor of the college and one of the reasons they are not is because they think we are too involved and too powerful and we overstep our turf." Yet interviews revealed that members of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa within TMCC and those without expressed pride in their new building.

The auditorium was envisioned as the second phase of the massive construction project of the north campus. When asked why the auditorium was the priority for the Fund's Campaign Sii Ha Sin, TMCC's president recalled:

*"We are isolated up here. … There is no auditorium in this whole county. So, for the Indian and non-Indian folks, there is no place to see good entertainment. The other thing is to nurture the talent we have here. There are some really talented people here, visual and performing artists and singers. We have some extremely talented people that have never had the opportunity to nurture that, and I am hoping we (can) do that."*

## Overview of TMCC's Campaign Sii Ha Sin-Funded Project

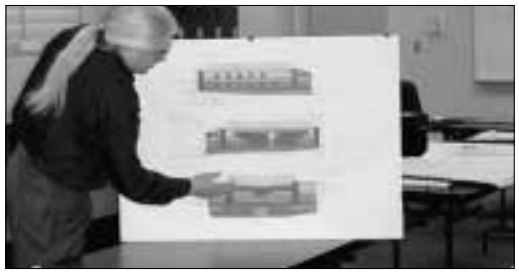
When the Fund announced that Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds were available to tribal colleges for facilities improvement, TMCC had just completed its first major building project—a large multipurpose building north of the college's old campus. Despite the generous campaign Sii Ha Sin funds, TMCC was concerned that it would not immediately be able to raise the money necessary to complete phase two of the facilities improvement, the auditorium and fine arts center. The plans for the center were created when phase one was designed. Although the college was poised for construction, the cost extended well beyond the Campaign Sii Ha Sin allotment. TMCC's president recalled, "I thought it would take 10 years to raise the money for the fine arts center. … I wanted [our college] to be able to tell funders that (Campaign Sii Ha Sin) money is set aside for Turtle Mountain." As a result, the college initially requested that the money be placed in an interest-earning account until TMCC was prepared to proceed with the project. With Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds immediately available, serendipity and grant-seeking savvy conspired to expedite the timeline on the auditorium and fine arts center.

In 2000, the USDA announced that funds would be available for construction grants to stimulate impoverished rural communities. With $1.1 million of Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds in hand, TMCC seized the opportunity and TMCC's Development Office swung into high gear. The Development Office, which resembles a military strategy room, complete with seven-foot dry-erase boards listing possible and secured funding, calendars, timelines and contacts, prepared a grant package in just a few weeks. TMCC asked for $1.7 million—the maximum amount that could be requested. Campaign Sii Ha Sin was presented as the required non-federal matching funds and, accompanied by the college's past track record with meeting or exceeding funders' expectations, the grant was awarded by Washington. The combined package of Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds and the USDA grant allowed TMCC to successfully pursue a Department of Education grant that was announced at the same time.

Finally, the college worked with senators to earmark funds for facilities. All told, TMCC used Campaign Sii Ha Sin to leverage a total of $5.5 million

### Campaign Sii Ha Sin Overview

- Construct an auditorium and fine arts center



to build the auditorium and fine arts center. TMCC's president shared, "We wouldn't have had (the additional funds to complete the center) if it wasn't for the (American Indian) College Fund."

However, piecing together the funding streams to finance a large construction project was not without its challenges. Each of the grants secured for the project had timing and use restrictions requiring the funding to be used sequentially. The Department of Education grant was a $1.2 million fiscal-year appropriation that had to be spent first, the USDA requires that its funds are spent last, and the American Indian College Fund preferred a monthly payment schedule (paid out as a ratio of total project cost to the total Campaign Sii Ha Sin funds available to the college). With the two rigorously restricted federal grants sandwiching the project, TMCC viewed Campaign Sii Ha Sin as the stopgap funding between the federal funding streams. However, the campaign's monthly ratio draw down prohibited this and caused TMCC some concern. TMCC feared that it would have to finance a portion of the project through loans as construction outpaced campaign funds. Furthermore, the USDA grant could not be accessed until the campaign funds were completely utilized.

The organizer for the construction process explained that the TMCC's building and construction processes are designed to ensure accountability and success. Due to the requirements associated with federal funding and the need to meet or exceed funders' expectations, TMCC adopted stringent building regulations and codes.[25] It put the construction project out to bid with national and international contractors. After hiring an outside firm, it put in place an additional safeguard by hiring an independent project inspector. Although the project was awarded to a firm off the reservation and a number of the vendors are not from the reservation, TMCC ensured that the majority of the work force (90-98%) resides on the reservation. The college also adopted a number of safeguards to ensure a successful construction project. For example, TMCC only allows its board of directors to authorize change orders to ensure that unanticipated costs are not incurred without a thorough review. A final safeguard associated with the construction is that TMCC only allows process orders from contractors on an as-spent or as-needed basis to ensure that payment is only made for jobs completed. The process orders are checked by four different sources and then submitted to funders.

## New Directions

Like the rest of TMCC's new facilities, the new auditorium will not only enhance the learning experiences of the students but will provide a central meeting area, performance center and event center for the entire Turtle Mountain community. The new multipurpose building constructed in phase one has already become a major meeting center for the community.

### Major Impacts of Campaign Sii Ha Sin

- Leveraged other building funds
- Expanded a track record of success with funders
- Inspired faculty to pursue new grants
- Increased enrollment
- Attracted younger students
- Stimulated future college expansion and development

25 Reservations, as sovereign nations, are exempt from any federal or state regulations regarding building codes.

This is in part due to the creation of a conference center open to the community at no cost. Community members use the gymnasium to exercise in the cold months, access the multiple computers that line the halls of the building, and attend clinics and discussions. TMCC has become a hub for the community, providing quality facilities to support a number of projects and events. The core of the college as a cultural center and a tribal college permeates the facilities and contributes to the overall feel and learning experience.

The new buildings have created a fervor of activity and subsequent impacts. Students and staff expressed that the new building gives them a sense of pride and imparts a sense of importance to the tribal college. One current student shared, "I'm so proud to be here. I'm so proud every day to walk in here. Just this building alone makes me feel good." A former student added, "When you see (this) building, it's kind of like we are up there with the big boys."

The number of students enrolled in TMCC has grown remarkably with the move to the new building. Furthermore, the average age of TMCC enrollees has continued to drop. Staff noted that the younger student population might be attracted because the new building commands respect. A graduate shared, "I have two sons who are graduating this year, and when we had the old campus they never, ever considered going to the college. But after seeing the new college, it looks more like a regular college and they are thinking that maybe the college isn't half bad. One (of my) sons definitely said he wanted to go here." The new capacity to house more students and attract younger ones has even impacted TMCC's recruitment strategies. The extra room, facilities, equipment and technology has redirected recruitment efforts to be more focused on younger students ready for post-secondary education, but perhaps not ready for an off-reservation college.

The energy level and number of faculty has also spiked since the new building was occupied and have resulted in the faculty being more engaged and energized. TMCC, upon receiving notification of Campaign Sii Ha Sin and pursing additional funding, hired two new staff with the express purpose of developing the arts and humanities department. The new staff, animated by the promise of new facilities, has been proactive in grant-seeking activities. One faculty member shared, "We're now going to conferences about humanities grants and endowments. We knew this was coming and the faculty is motivated and excited." Indeed, with the promise of a new facility, the staff sees the opportunities to expand the current curriculum and have taken it upon themselves to write grants that provide new arts and humanities curriculum as well as student supplies and equipment.

Finally, TMCC sees the completion of the auditorium and fine arts center as the beginning of a new era of tribal college education and services to the Turtle Mountain community. With the successes of the large-scale capital improvement projects, the college is looking ahead to using these experiences in future fund raising as proof positive of the abilities of the college. The momentum, for example, is apparent in the Anishinabe Cultural and Wellness Center. The center will be a comprehensive center dedicated to the traditional healing arts. The college has already acquired approximately 100 acres for the center through a grant and is moving towards developing the programs and the facilities to accommodate new land grant programs and health and wellness activities. The college has also identified a number of capital improvement needs that will be next on the list of improvements, including childcare centers, student housing and the possibility of addressing student transportation. As TMCC's president looked out of his office window at the new construction and described the plans for the college, his eyes lit up. He said, "It just shows that there is a lot of excitement out there."

## Conclusion

Turtle Mountain Community College has come a long way from its humble beginnings. In 30 years, the college has gone from holding classes wherever there was a free space in the community, to being a central meeting place for the community. Campaign Sii Ha Sin played a major part in making the dreams of the Turtle Mountain community a reality.

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# Appendix A

## Tribal Colleges and Universities Represented in the 2002 AICF Tribal College Graduate Survey Sample

1. Bay Mills Community College
2. Blackfeet Community College
3. Cankdeska Cikana Community College
4. College of the Menominee Nation
5. Crownpoint Institute of Technology
6. D-Q University
7. Diné College
8. Chief Dull Knife College
9. Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College
10. Fort Belknap College
11. Fort Berthold Community College
12. Fort Peck Community College
13. Haskell Indian Nations University
14. Institute of American Indian Arts
15. Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College
16. Leech Lake Tribal College
17. Little Big Horn College
18. Little Priest Tribal College
19. Nebraska Indian Community College
20. Northwest Indian College
21. Oglala Lakota College
22. Salish Kootenai College
23. Sinte Gleska University
24. Sisseton Wahpeton College
25. Sitting Bull College
26. Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute
27. Stone Child College
28. Turtle Mountain Community College
29. United Tribes Technical College
30. White Earth Tribal and Community College

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