

KEY FINDINGS

Recruiting & Retaining Indigenous Educators

for school and district leaders



This document synthesizes key findings from Chapter 4 of the *Systems and Supports to Develop Indigenous Educators Landscape Analysis Report*. It is designed to help inform school and district leaders about promising practices and innovative solutions for recruiting and retaining Indigenous educators.

Explore the full report at r16cc.org/resources for detailed recommendations for Tribes, teacher education programs, and regional and state agencies.

RECOMMENDATION 1: CENTER INDIGENOUS CULTURES

“It’s not necessarily about taking a test. A lot of times what it comes down to is, if we’re building a canoe, if we’re building a mask: What is the story behind that? How did it come to be? What were the skills that took to develop that? And knowing who [you] are and where you come from, no matter what race you are.

Interview Participant
Systems and Supports to Develop Indigenous Educators

HOW CAN MY DISTRICT IMPLEMENT THIS RECOMMENDATION?

Centering Indigenous cultures in your instructional practices can support recruitment and retention of Indigenous educators. Your school or district can:

- » Share how the school enacts Indigenous education philosophies or practices to demonstrate support for Indigenous educators in the recruitment process.
- » Build school calendars that align with seasonal rounds and reflect seasonal and annual practices of local Nations. Aligning lessons with Indigenous seasonal practices can provide a frame for passing on language and culture.
- » Partner with Indigenous communities to share cultural knowledge.
- » Develop culturally sustaining assessments.

RECOMMENDATION 2: PROVIDE A CULTURALLY SUSTAINING CLIMATE AND SUPPORTIVE LEADERS

“Each and every teacher learns the culture and the perspectives and understands the deeper knowledge... we’re going to teach [our staff] all the things [they] need to know to be able to be culturally competent, so that we can retain [Indigenous educators] long term. And then that just begets more people wanting to be here because they want to be around people who are culturally competent.

Interview Participant
Systems and Supports to Develop Indigenous Educators

HOW CAN MY DISTRICT IMPLEMENT THIS RECOMMENDATION?

Supportive leaders at all levels and a culturally affirming climate can bolster recruitment and retention. Your school or district can:

- » Offer competitive pay and other compensation strategies to attract applicants, including classified staff and cultural practitioners.
- » Ensure there are Indigenous community members in leadership or advisory roles.



- » Articulate a clear mission and vision that is relevant to the needs of Indigenous students.
- » Cultivate supportive administrators at the district and school levels.
- » Foster a culture of continuous improvement that includes reviewing data and planning and making decisions transparently and collaboratively.
- » Build relationships with potential candidates early in their educational pathways, such as through job fairs for college students or graduates who have not yet obtained their teaching certificate.
- » Provide educators training and support to try new strategies and take risks.
- » Provide regular professional development for all staff around Indigenous culture and culturally sustaining teaching.

RECOMMENDATION 3: SUPPORT NEW INDIGENOUS EDUCATORS

“ If we’re having a struggle in an area, we’re going to push in ... we’re going to invest in that teacher. If that means that we have to pay the company to have a coach come

in ... to make sure they understand that complex curriculum, then we’re going to do that for them, and so every step of the way just wrapping around them ... with support.”

Interview Participant
Systems and Supports to Develop Indigenous Educators

HOW CAN MY DISTRICT IMPLEMENT THIS RECOMMENDATION?

Supporting new Indigenous educators with the transition into the workforce can improve retention. Your school or district can:

- » Provide mentoring, training, and coaching supports to early-career teachers. Pair new teachers with experienced teachers who share an Indigenous identity or perspectives and can model instruction and classroom management.
- » Offer regular learning communities with coaches specialized in content or instructional supports, as well as communities that “... affirm teachers’ Indigenous identity, support their advocacy for Tribal educational Sovereignty and nation building, and nurture long-term professional relationships” (Gist, Bristol, Carver-Thomas et al., 2021, p. 63).
- » Provide other wraparound supports to new educators, such as navigating federal student loan forgiveness procedures.



SO IS IT JUST AS EASY AS 1, 2, 3?

Not quite. Centuries of violence against and vilification of Indigenous peoples, cultures and languages can’t be undone in a day. These recommendations should be part of ongoing work to better support current and future generations of Native students, educators, and families. This is just the beginning.



ABOUT REGION 16 COMPREHENSIVE CENTER

Region 16 Comprehensive Center, a network of 29 educational service agencies in Alaska, Oregon, and Washington, is a responsive and innovative partner guided by the needs of educators and communities to improve the quality and equity of education for each student.

Region 16’s innovative model creates stronger networks of services and supports for students, staff, families, and educators. Relationships with our communities and equitable access to opportunities for our students are at the center of our mission, vision, and values.

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