WEAVING FUTURES IN RELATIONSHIP

Honoring Legacy, Rooted Knowledge, and Gathering Leaders

Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

WEAVING FUTURES IN RELATIONSHIP

Honoring Legacy, Rooted Knowledge, and Gathering Leaders

2025

Henry Strom (Yakama)
Assistant Superintendent, Office of Native Education

Prepared by: Shandy Abrahamson (Colville) | Director, Office of Native Education; Maxine Alex (Diné) | Tribal Consultation Program Supervisor, Office of Native Education; Bawaajigekwe Boulley (Ojibwe) | Native Student Success Program Supervisor, Office of Native Education; Kathrine Lawrence (Skokomish) | Administrative Program Specialist, Office of Native Education; Destiney Petty (Colville) | Tribal Language Program Supervisor, Office of Native Education; Rebecca Purser (Suquamish) | Education Cultivation Program Supervisor, Office of Native Education; Kari Tally | Administrative Assistant, Office of Native Education

Writing and Design: Kate Hoyt

Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We honor the land as a living relative and offer gratitude to the Palus people, the Nimíipuu (Nez Perce), Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla peoples, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, who have carried forward its sacred stewardship since time immemorial.

The Tribal Education Leaders Summit represents a profound exercise of Tribal sovereignty and a meaningful step toward reconciliation, ensuring our children experience an education system rooted in cultural and political resilience, honoring the next seven generations, and embodying the Centennial Accord in action. We extend gratitude to waaph qah qun Drum for the Flag Song and Victory Song, and to those who provided the Posting of the Colors and blessing.

Tribal & Education Leaders

We honor the Tribal education leaders whose presence and voices shaped this summit: Alana Quintasket (Swinomish), Charles Adkins (Tulalip), Dr. Elese Washines (Yakama), Joyce McFarland (Nez Perce), Kay Seven (Nez Perce), Leanne Campbell (Colville), Leonard Forsman (Suquamish), Meghan Francis (Colville), Melanie Al-Nesayan (Colville), Monica Tonasket (Spokane), Patricia Conway (Puyallup), Shirley Allman (Nez Perce), Tammy James (Colville), Ralph Sampson, Jr. (Yakama), Mariah Stearns (Spokane), Karee Picard (Nez Perce), Alicia Wheeler (Nez Perce), Toni Jones (Port Gamble S'Klallam), Jessica Bustad (Tulalip), Jessica Egnew (Lower Elwha Klallam), Lisa Haltunnen (Makah), and Nakia Williamson-Cloud (Nez Perce). We also recognize Superintendent Chris Reykdal for his commitment to advancing government-to-government dialogue and meaningful partnership with tribal nations.

Planning Committee

The vision and intentionality of this summit were carried forward by the planning committee in partnership with ONE staff: Tammy James, Dr. Lexie Tom (Lummi, NWIC), Dr. Elese Washines, Joyce McFarland, Anna Armstrong (Kalispel), Dr. Zoe Higheagle Strong (WSU), Meghan Francis, Michael Vendiola (Swinomish, Lummi, Visayan), Dr. Michael Munson (WSU), Elizabeth Martin (WSU), and Karly Gomez (WSU). Special recognition to Tammy James for her exceptional commitment and to Michael Vendiola for the facilitation that ensured every voice was honored.

Strategic Partners

We acknowledge Jon Claymore, Willard Bill, Jr., Zenitha Jimicum, and Gordon James for their expertise and coordination. We thank the WSU team for hosting and logistical support: Bill Tracy, Rob Baker, and Vik Scott. We recognize the ONE and OSPI staff: Henry Strom, Shandy Abrahamson, Maxine Alex, Kathrine Lawrence, Rebecca Purser, Destiney Petty, Bawaajigekwe Boulley, and Kari Tally.

This summit was made possible through the collective effort. Together, we created a historic moment of government-to-government dialogue that honors Tribal sovereignty and opens pathways for meaningful systemic change in education. We carry this work forward in gratitude and commitment to the generations to come.

FRONT MATTER: HISTORY, CONTEXT & INTENTION

Background and Purpose

The Tribal Education Leaders Summit convened in Pullman, Washington, on Thursday, April 17, 2025, at the Palouse Ridge Golf Course and concluded on Friday, April 18, 2025, at the Elson S. Floyd Cultural Center. These events took place on the homelands of the Palus people and within the shared territories of the Nimíipuu (Nez Perce), Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla peoples. We also honor and acknowledge the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, which includes Palus descendants, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, who maintain enduring connections to this land.

The Summit emerged as a response to a call for dialogue on education guided by tribally led priorities—a need identified by tribal leaders from previous Centennial Accords. The Centennial Accord, signed in 1989, established a government-to-government framework to ensure that tribal nations have a direct and respected voice with state leadership, rather than serving as an avenue for agencies to promote their own priorities.

> ***"Let's make this [Summit] an annual event."***
>
> — Ralph Sampson (Yakama)

The Summit brought together elected tribal officials, Tribal Education Directors, and OSPI leadership, including Superintendent Chris Reykdal, to engage in meaningful consultation and strategic planning grounded in tribal sovereignty, data sovereignty, and the success of Washington's Native students.

Summit Day One

Before the formal start of the Summit, Tribal leaders and education staff gathered for a pre-Summit training on the John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial (JMLSTI) curriculum, Washington's required tribal sovereignty education, grounding the convening in shared learning. Following the training, the first day of the Summit was devoted to tribal-to-tribal collaboration, establishing a space for leaders to share concerns, surface common challenges, and brainstorm solutions together before entering into dialogue with state officials. Discussions centered around pre-identified topics requested by tribes:

- **Funding and Resources:** Examining federal, state, and tribal funding streams with a focus on maximizing resources and addressing existing vulnerabilities.
- **Strategic Planning:** Developing long-term education plans rooted in sovereignty and cultural priorities and sharing success stories from tribal nations.

- **Data and Accountability:** Exploring data sovereignty, student privacy, and best practices for tribal-led data collection and governance.
- **Higher Education:** Strengthening tribal colleges and universities, expanding access to higher education and workforce pathways, and breaking barriers in financial aid and student retention.
- **State–Tribal Partnerships**: Mapping out the role of state agencies and strategies for navigating policy and funding systems.
- **Consultation Practices:** Reviewing ESSA consultation requirements, Indian Policies and Procedures tied to Impact Aid, and identifying best practices for consultation.

Day 1 closed with a large-group discussion that identified three top priorities for the next day's government-to-government dialogue with OSPI leadership:

1. **The impacts of the Trump administration's policies and actions on Native education**
2. **Student data, accountability, and tribal partnerships**
3. **Tribal language revitalization and strengthening Native identity**

Participants also identified three guiding principles, articulated as shared value statements:

1. **Tribal sovereignty drives educational self-determination**
2. **Belonging is primary to academic achievement**
3. **Data sovereignty is essential for educational equity**

Summit Day Two

Day Two of the Tribal Education Leaders Summit was dedicated to government-to-government dialogue between Tribal leaders and Superintendent Chris Reykdal, with discussions centering on the top priorities identified at the end of Day One: federal policy impacts, student data and accountability, and tribal language revitalization. The conversations highlighted both immediate concerns—such as funding stability, data sovereignty, and certification pathways for language teachers—and longer-term commitments to equity, sovereignty, and Native student success. This report organizes the Day Two proceedings into themes composed of three interwoven strands: tribal priorities and concerns, OSPI responses and commitments, and actionable next steps.

> *"[This Summit brings together] the right people at the right time in the right place."*
>
> — Henry Strom (Yakama)

The Tribal Education Leaders Summit Report: Purpose and Audiences

This report is both a record and a living document. It captures the voices, insights, and commitments shared at the Summit, while also offering a blueprint for carrying this work forward into policies, practices, and concrete actions.

This report's audience is broad, encompassing state agencies, policymakers, Tribal governments, educators, families, and community leaders. Above all, it is written with Native families and Elders in mind, honoring their guidance and ensuring the language remains accessible, meaningful, and actionable as we chart a path forward together.

Methodology

The planning and documentation of the Summit were grounded in deliberative, intentional, and collective processes designed to center tribally led facilitation and agenda-setting—a need tribal leaders identified at recent Centennial Accord dialogues between tribal and state leaders.

The Summit Planning Committee, composed of Tribal leaders and state liaisons from OSPI and the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA), crafted a tribally led agenda by engaging directly with Washington Tribes and working collectively to center their priorities. Given the vast and diverse array of concerns leaders voiced, the Summit's format and the Committee's note-taking processes were designed to delve deeply into identified topics and advance action-oriented solutions.

> ***"Us being here at the table is tribal self-determination."***
>
> — Joyce McFarland (Nez Perce)

The protocol for notetaking at the Summit was designed as more than documentation—it was a collective act of witnessing, guided by Indigenous principles of the 6Rs: Respect, Responsibility, Relationships, Reciprocity, Relevance, and Representation. Each notetaker carried a specific lens—whether capturing tribal priorities, OSPI commitments, actionable steps, relational themes, emotional expression, or resonant language—so that no single perspective defined the record. This approach honored the plurality of truths shared, acknowledged the emotional and cultural weight of the discussions, and emphasized strength-informed perspectives rooted in collectivity. Above all, note-takers recognized their role as listeners and witnesses first and note-takers second, honoring the importance of respectful presence in dialogue.

Intentionality around the note-taking process also carried a forward-looking vision: the format and protocol of the Summit were designed to act as a living blueprint that could be carried forward in future Centennial Accord dialogues and similar summits dedicated to early education and higher education. In this way, the practice of collective note-taking became both a living record of Summit discussions and a blueprint for sustaining these conversations across educational contexts and generations of leaders.

> ***"We are on a continuous journey [of] learning. And I see everybody in this room has that understanding [...] that we have important work to do for our future generations. That's why we are all here. I want to see my children and my grandchildren—I don't even have any grandchildren, but I know their little spirits will be on their way—have a promising future, and that's why we do this work."***
>
> — Joyce McFarland (Nez Perce)

Themes and Value Statements

The Summit's conversations carried many threads, weaving together five central themes rooted in the values of Washington's Native tribes. These themes are not separate strands but interwoven—braiding into one another, reinforcing and strengthening the whole. At the heart of every discussion was the well-being and belonging of Native students, a foundation from which all else flows. For clarity, this report organizes key insights under distinct headings, but it is important to remember that concerns, commitments, and next steps are bound together across categories. Some threads speak directly to student wellness, while others—such as funding resilience or data sovereignty—are the pathways that sustain and protect that wellness over time.

TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY, RELATIONSHIPS & CONSULTATION

- Education is a sacred responsibility rooted in community and identity and vested in the sovereignty of tribal nations.
- Planning must align with traditional cultural virtues.
- Schools must support ceremony, family, and community engagement.
- True consultation happens through trust-building and long-term relationships.

DATA SOVEREIGNTY

- Tribes have a right to know their students.
- Data access and transparency are critical for tribal education planning.
- Data collection practices must visibilize Native students and avoid erasure.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL REVITALIZATION

- As Elders pass, language and cultural preservation become increasingly urgent.
- Education is a collective and inter-generational journey, requiring involvement from Elders and communities.
- Language learning is healing, grounding, and central to belonging.
- Language and cultural revitalization is long-term, spiritual work that must be embedded in all aspects of education.

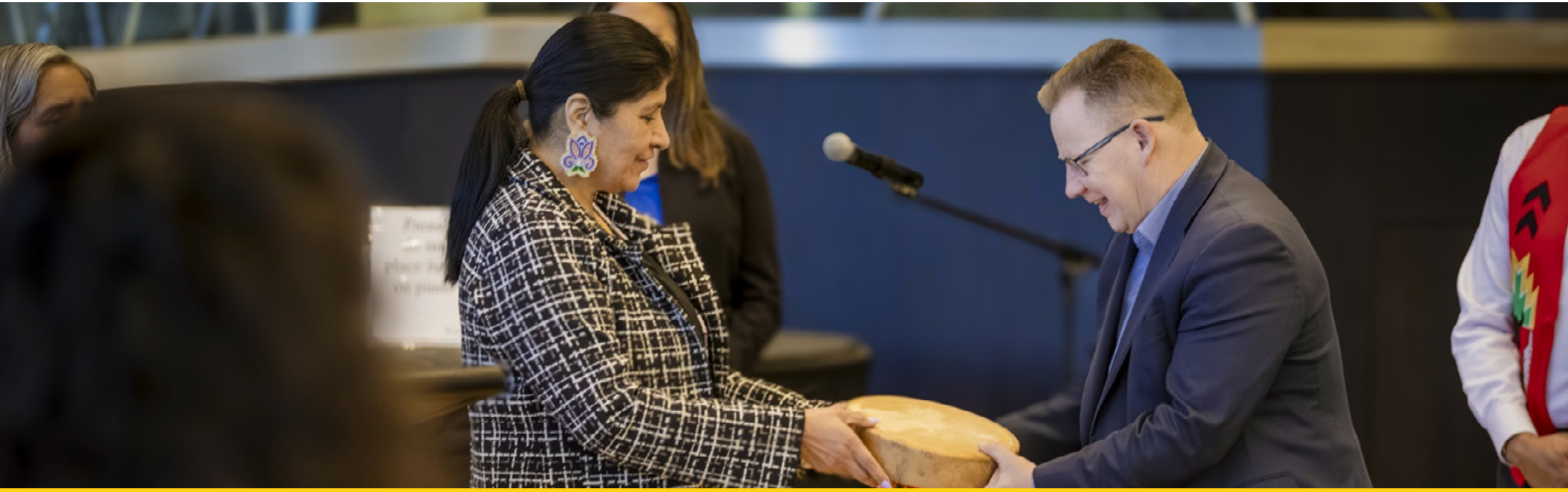
WELLNESS AND BELONGING

- Belonging before achievement: Indigenous students thrive when they are supported in knowing who they are and where they come from.
- Practices and approaches that celebrate Indigenous identity must replace policies that force students to choose between school and culture.
- Harm prevention must be culturally rooted: Elders, canoes, and community traditions are integral to solutions for student well-being.

FUNDING RESILIENCE

- In this political moment, we must protect our programs from national threats.
- Tribal-state partnerships must be proactive in consultation-informed advocacy to innovate funding avenues.

> ***"Education is our responsibility, so we can advocate for our Native children at the highest levels."***
>
> –Zoe Higheagle Strong (Nez Perce)



SOVEREIGNTY, CONSULTATION & RELATIONSHIPS

Background

Consultation is the formal process through which tribal governments engage with federal, state, and local agencies as sovereign nations. In Washington, this responsibility was affirmed in 2008, when the legislature enacted RCW 43.376, requiring state agencies to make early and meaningful efforts to consult with tribes, provide annual training, and report on these government-to-government relationships.

In practice, the experience of consultation has not always matched its intent. While the law provides a framework, tribal leaders stress that consultation is not a box to be checked but a relationship to be built and sustained. True consultation is grounded in trust, begins early in the decision-making process, and honors Tribal governments as equal partners. Importantly, only official representatives of tribal governments may participate in consultation, ensuring that decisions reflect the sovereign authority and historical, collective knowledge of each nation. Consultation also requires patience and respect for the realities of each community: no two tribes are alike, and their voices must be heard on their own terms and timelines.

Summit discussions highlighted the imperative that tribes must be able to act as an authority on educational decisions for their communities, rather than accepting advisory roles.

> *"Any relationships with your office will be truly on a government-to-government basis."*
>
> ——Ralph Sampson, Jr. (Yakama)

Tribal Concerns

- **Sustained communication:** Tribal leaders expressed that consultation often feels episodic and tied to compliance or specific events. Tribes require consistent and transparent updates throughout the year on programs, funding, data, and commitments. Without regular communication, tribes risk being left out of decision-making or only consulted after key policies have been set.
  - *In Idaho, tribes meet quarterly with the state's ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) program director. These meetings give tribes direct access to data, updates, and decision-making about federal education programs. Washington tribal leaders expressed a desire to mirror this model of transparency and relationship-building with OSPI.*

- **Proactive advocacy:** Participants emphasized the need for tribes to be proactive in approaching districts, agencies, and elected officials—including Congress—for consultation and to advocate for policies that protect their interests. Tribal leaders voiced the need for a collective effort to reach out to both sides of the aisle and engage in bipartisan conversations.

- **Accountability measures:** Summit participants noted that official forms and documentation can often help hold districts and agencies accountable for following through on expectations and commitments. Tribal leaders requested clarification about whether the Affirmation of Tribal Consultation, a form required to document and follow required consultation procedures, could be used for relationships that are not required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

- **Multi-district convenings:** In counties where multiple districts have Tribal Unique Agreements (UAs) or in districts that have UAs with multiple tribes, the system is set up to address each district-tribe relationship in isolation. Tribal leaders expressed a desire to convene tribes and their surrounding districts to share practices, data, and consultation. These meetings would be co-convened by OSPI, ONE, and the host tribe, ensuring both state and tribal leadership co-design the agenda. A proposed standard agenda would include three pillars:

  - ***Data Sharing:*** *Ensuring tribes have access to accurate, disaggregated student data and opportunities to address challenges in reporting.*
  - ***Consultation Norms:*** *Clarifying expectations for government-to-government consultation and sharing best practices.*
  - ***Funding Navigation:*** *Providing guidance on braiding/blending federal, state, and tribal education funds, with space to surface funding vulnerabilities and opportunities.*

- **Community assessment teaming:** Discussions surfaced the need for tribes to be included in community assessment teaming processes for district-level Learning Assistance Program (LAP) and Integrated Student Supports (ISS) planning. This ensures that tribes play a leadership role in the planning process and can leverage the collective knowledge of their communities.

> ***"Relationships before structure; the conversation needs to keep going."***
>
> — Henry Strom (Yakama)

OSPI Response & Commitments

- **Sustained communication:** OSPI acknowledged that consultation too often feels episodic and agreed that communication must extend beyond compliance checkpoints. Staff suggested hosting regular webinars and producing an annual newsletter or similar tool to provide timely information on funding, data, and policy changes. These communications would be designed to keep tribes informed throughout the year and allow tribes to shape key decisions early in the planning stages, improving government-to-government relationships and transparency.
- **Accountability measures:** In response to questions about the Affirmation of Tribal Consultation (ATC) form, OSPI clarified that while the form cannot be formally submitted outside ESSA's Consolidated Grant Application, it can still serve as a valuable record of consultation. Staff encouraged the use of ATC forms as documentation of good-faith engagement, emphasizing that they provide an important accountability mechanism even when not formally submitted to OSPI.
- **Multi-district convenings:** OSPI staff expressed openness to piloting regional convenings, especially when co-hosted with tribes. They agreed that such gatherings could improve consistency across districts, establish shared expectations around consultation norms, and provide a platform for coordinated planning on issues such as data sharing and funding strategies.

Actionable Next Steps

- **Proactive advocacy:** Develop a coordinated approach for bipartisan advocacy at district, state, and federal levels to ensure tribal education priorities are advanced and protected.
- **Sustained communication:** Establish year-round communication avenues from OSPI, such as regular webinars and newsletters, to enhance ongoing transparency and engagement, in addition to sustained, yearly Tribal Education Leaders Summits.
- **Community assessment teaming:** Formalize the inclusion of tribal representatives in community assessment teams for programs such as LAP and ISS, ensuring that cultural knowledge guides planning.
- **Accountability measures:** Encourage broader use of the ATC form to document consultation as a good-faith practice across multiple contexts, even when not required by federal reporting.
- **Multi-district convenings:** Pilot regional convenings co-hosted by OSPI, ONE, and tribes to strengthen collaboration across multiple districts and establish shared agendas focused on data, consultation practices, and funding resilience.

DATA SOVEREIGNTY

Background

Due to problematic data collection practices like top-coding multiracial students, Native students have long been undercounted in state and federal data collection systems, resulting in lost resources, incomplete accountability, and erasure in policy. When data about Native students is reported to the federal government, reporting policy dictates that students must only be coded as a single ethnicity or race. This means that students who are both Native and Hispanic, or Native and another race, are not counted as Native at all—leaving an incomplete picture of Native student representation in schools and in the general population.

In Washington, tribes advocate for the reporting category "Maximum ID" (Max ID) to make sure every student with Native identity is included before being rolled up into federal categories. Leaders emphasized that accurate, timely, and tribally governed data is not only about numbers, but about ensuring Native students are seen and supported in ways that reflect the lived realities of their communities.

At the heart of discussions was the concept of data sovereignty—the principle that tribes have the right to govern and interpret data about their own students—as both a matter of tribal sovereignty and a practical requirement for educational equity.

Summit discussions surfaced the need to balance the necessity of visibilizing Native students in data and policy while maintaining tribal sovereignty over the way data is collected, processed, and interpreted. Additionally, Summit conversations touched on the risks of individual Native students being identified through small data sets.

Tribal Concerns

- **Federal vs. state reporting:** Tribal leaders raised concerns about how data flows between state and federal systems, asking whether state submissions (like CEDARS) could fulfill federal reporting requirements. The discussion around this possibility was met with some nuance. While using state data mechanisms may help address the issue of Native student undercounting, participants cautioned that when the state sends data directly to federal agencies, it risks bypassing tribes and undermining their sovereign authority over student data.
- **Dashboard access:** Summit attendees emphasized the need for a Native student dashboard that provides disaggregated data accessible to designated tribal officials. Such a tool would enable tribes to track academic performance, enrollment, and other indicators in real time, with tribe-specific filters where agreements allow.

- **Enrollment processes:** Discussion participants urged that 506 forms, used to identify AI/AN students in schools, be distributed in every district enrollment packet. They noted that without this step, Native students may go unidentified, leading to chronic undercounting and lost opportunities for services.
- **Templates and agreements:** Leaders requested clear, accessible templates for memoranda of understanding (MOUs), memoranda of agreement (MOAs), and other data-sharing agreements. They shared that creating agreements from scratch is time-consuming and that templates would reduce administrative burdens while affirming tribal sovereignty through locally adapted versions. Discussion participants pointed to WSSDA's sample templates, which OSPI/ONE could host as part of a one-stop resource hub for tribal consultation. These templates would serve as a starting point, allowing tribes to adapt agreements to reflect their sovereignty and community needs.
- **Electronic signatures:** Summit attendees stressed that OSPI's continued reliance on wet signatures for Title VI forms creates unnecessary barriers. They noted that federal agencies like the Title VI Office already accept e-signatures and urged the state to update its guidance to match. This would alleviate one of the numerous burdens tribes face in obtaining accurate counts of Native student representation in schools.

> *"Every [piece of] student information we gather is super important to us [...] we need accurate [and timely] data."*
>
> — Elese Washines (Yakama)

OSPI Response & Commitments

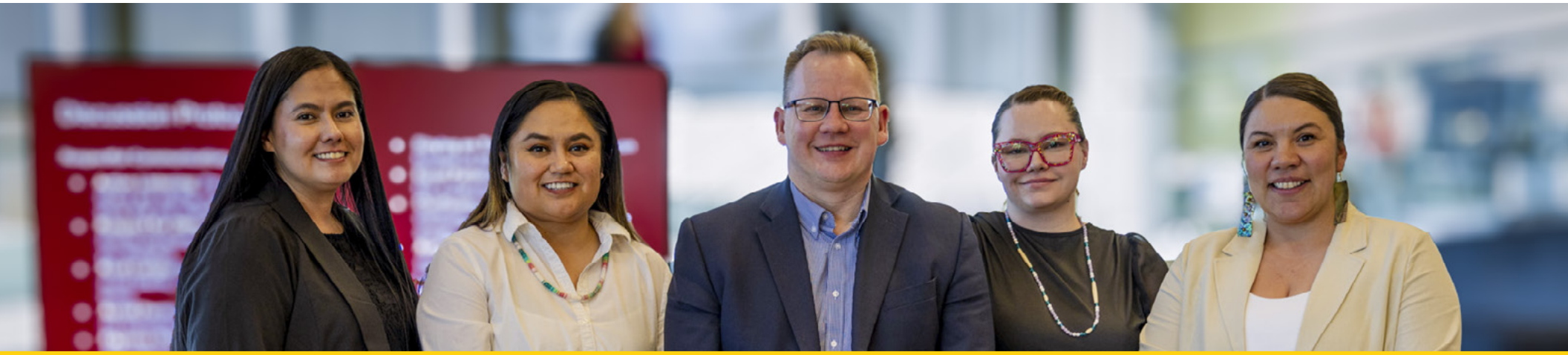
- **Federal vs. state reporting:** OSPI acknowledged the complexity of federal and state reporting systems and agreed that greater clarity is needed around how data flows across different jurisdictions. Staff committed to developing guidance that explains how the two systems interact and how tribes can maintain oversight when data is transmitted at multiple levels. Superintendent Reykdal also suggested that OSPI and ONE could support the design and delivery of professional development modules to train district staff on how and when data must be shared with tribes.
- **Enrollment processes:** OSPI affirmed the importance of 506 forms, citing ATNI's resolution on urging districts to include the forms in all registration packets. Staff committed to sending out statewide bulletins reminding districts to include 506 forms in their registration packets, a critical step toward more accurate identification of Native students.

- **Templates and agreements:** OSPI staff pointed to existing templates available through WSSDA and committed to helping districts and tribes adapt agreements to reflect unique community needs and meet FERPA and tribal data governance requirements.
- **Electronic signatures:** Superintendent Reykdal acknowledged the burden created by wet-signature requirements and supported the idea of recommending that schools adopt electronic signatures. While no formal policy change was announced, his affirmation is a step toward aligning state practices with federal acceptance of e-signatures.

> *"Tribes have a right to know their students."*
>
> — Shandy Abrahamson (Colville)

Actionable Next Steps

- **Templates and agreements:** Visibilize and share links to data-sharing agreement templates, exploring the viability of creating a central resource hub while extending support for adapting templates to local tribal contexts.
- **Federal vs. state reporting:** Provide clear professional learning opportunities for district staff on: (a) coding and identification practices to reduce undercounting, (b) what can/can't be forwarded to federal systems (and why), (c) how MOUs/DSAs govern sharing with tribes, and (d) who at OSPI to call for real-time help.
- **Enrollment processes:** Issue a bulletin recommending districts include 506 forms in all district enrollment packets.
- **Electronic signatures:** Update state guidance to allow electronic signatures on all Title VI forms.



LANGUAGE & CULTURAL REVITALIZATION

Background

Language and culture ground students in who they are, shaping their sense of belonging in both school and community. As Elders pass, the urgency of sustaining tribal language programs deepens. The gravity of this work is rooted in historical traumas such as the Assimilationist Movement and Boarding School Era, during which Native languages, cultures, and lifeways were systematically suppressed, criminalized, and driven underground. Yet despite these dark periods, the revitalization of Indigenous languages and cultures not only persists but continues to grow, led by tribal nations and knowledge keepers. Tribal leaders underscored that language revitalization is not simply an educational initiative but a matter of cultural survival, requiring true partnership and shared responsibility between tribes and the state.

> *"Time is of the essence: we are beginning to lose our Elders. We do need this time and [these] resources [...] Language revitalization is long-term work."*
>
> — Leanne Campbell (Colville)

Tribal Concerns

» **Shared responsibility:** The discussion revealed that while tribes have taken the lead in sustaining language work, they cannot shoulder the responsibility alone. Tribal leaders called for the state to act as a partner in preserving language and culture through program support, funding, and policy alignment. Educational leaders also uplifted the 6Rs—Respect, Responsibility, Relationship, Reciprocity, Relevance, and Representation—as guiding principles for structuring this shared responsibility.

> *"All strategic planning must honor a cultural match and brace those plans in traditional virtues—something our ancestors can understand."*
>
> — Elese Washines (Yakama)

» **Compensation inequities:** Tribal leaders described the disparities faced by tribal language experts, many of whom hold First Peoples' Language, Culture and Oral Traditions (FPLCOT) certifications but are not compensated equitably. These educators are frequently excluded from stipended roles, restricted to narrow teaching assignments, and placed at lower pay scales compared to peers holding world language or bilingual endorsements. Attendees emphasized that these inequities undermine the state's articulated commitments to language revitalization and present barriers to tribes' abilities to guide cultural and language programming.

> ***"We are guarded in our teachings. Our language [...] comes with responsibilities. Language teachers [deserve to] receive pay aligned with the invaluable knowledge they carry."***
>
> — Leanne Campbell (Colville)

» **Clarifying funding rules:** Participants highlighted the need for clarity around programs such as Learning Assistance Programs (LAP) and Integrated Student Supports (ISS). They noted that without explicit guidance, districts often assume that funds cannot be applied to tribal cultural or language programs, even though they are critical to Native student belonging and achievement.

OSPI Responses & Commitments

» **Clarifying funding rules:** OSPI clarified that LAP dollars may be directed toward language instruction when identified as an academic need through consultation. For professional development of language teachers, staff pointed to federal Title II-A funds, committing to publishing examples of allowable uses for training in language and oral traditions.

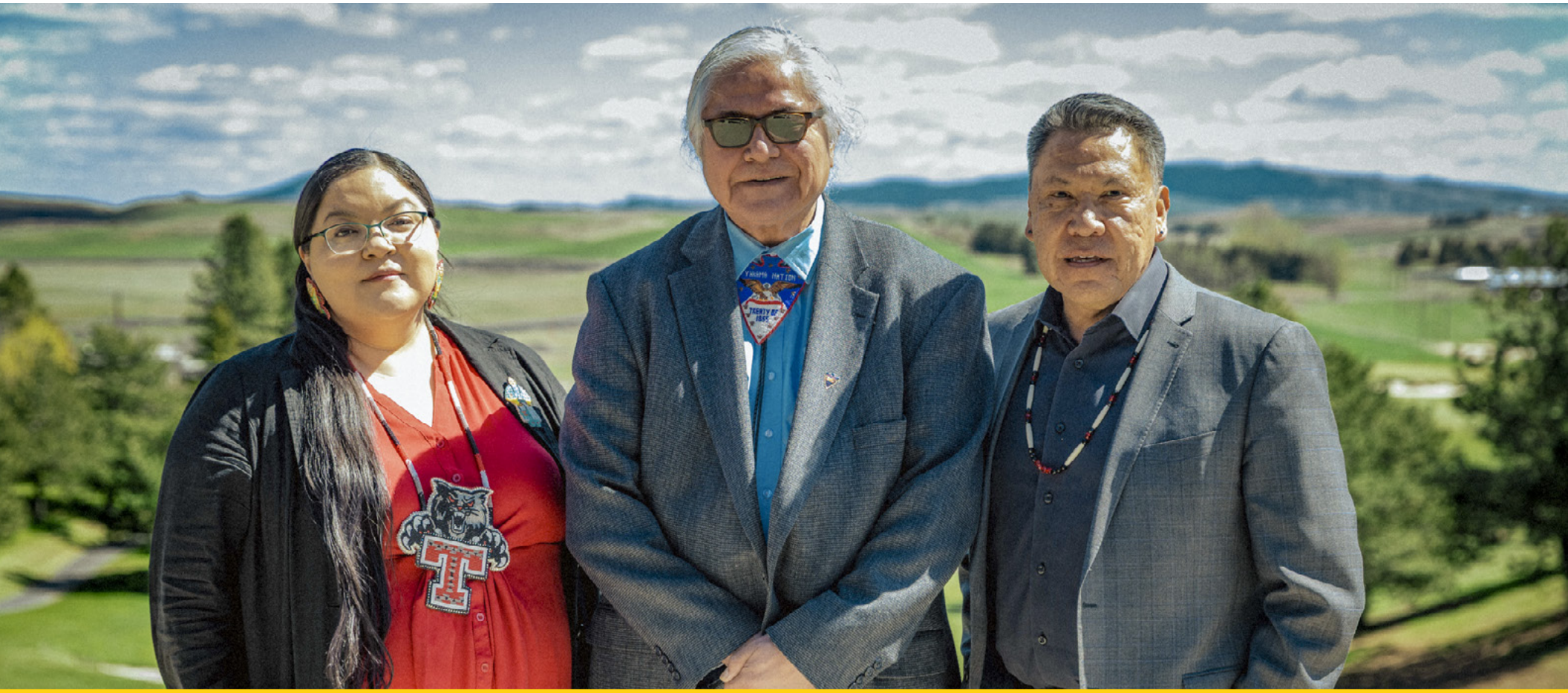
Actionable Next Steps

» **Shared responsibility:** Embed the 6Rs framework (Respect, Responsibility, Relationship, Reciprocity, Relevance, Representation) into program evaluations and accountability structures, co-created between OSPI/districts and tribes, to reflect Indigenous definitions of success and reinforce shared responsibility for language work.

> ***"The only time students were showing up and logging on [during the pandemic] was when there was language and culture [in the curriculum]."***
>
> — Elese Washines (Yakama)

» **Compensation inequities:** Work with the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) to clarify how professional development for tribal language teachers is recognized in certification and pay systems, paving a path for equity with peers in other endorsed fields.

» **Clarifying funding rules:** Publish examples of allowable Title II-A uses for language and oral tradition professional development alongside contact information for guidance to support local adaptation.



FUNDING RESILIENCE

Background

Funding resilience emerged as a central theme, as tribal leaders voiced deep concern over the fragility of both federal and state funding streams as the current federal administration imposes sweeping cuts to the U.S. Department of Education and other programs that affect Native communities and governments. Federal programs like Impact Aid and Head Start remain lifelines, but their vulnerability to these cuts underscores the urgency of creating more stable, flexible, and sovereign pathways to sustaining Native education. Discussion participants emphasized that funding resilience is not simply a technical or fiscal concern, but an expression of sovereignty: the ability of tribes and Native communities to plan, invest, and protect resources for their students across generations.

> *"There wouldn't be all these attacks on us if we were weak. We have a strong message."*
>
> — Leonard Forsman (Suquamish)

Tribal Concerns

- **Sustaining ONE's continued growth:** Tribal leaders voiced support for the growth of the Office of Native Education in recent years and asked how the state will sustain and build upon that expansion in the face of potential funding cuts at both federal and state levels. Their concern was not only about short-term budgets, but about ensuring the office's work continues as a lasting commitment to Native students and communities
- **Federal program vulnerability:** Tribal leaders emphasized the vital role of Impact Aid, one of the few federal programs that flows directly to districts serving Native students without requiring them to compete for selective grants. They also highlighted Head Start as essential to early childhood education, as well as family and community engagement. Both programs, they warned, are highly vulnerable to cuts that would disproportionately harm tribal communities.
- **State program dependency:** Summit attendees expressed concern about the volatility of state-funded programs, particularly those that flow through Education Service Districts (ESDs), Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, and district allocations. They noted that when reductions occur, entire programs are often cut outright.

While this approach may balance budgets more quickly, it leaves Native-serving schools especially vulnerable: if a program that disproportionately benefits Native students is eliminated in full, tribes and districts lose critical resources overnight, with no partial funding left to sustain essential services.

» **Funding flexibility:** Discussion participants asked whether federal funds like Impact Aid and Title VI could be incorporated into 477 plans, which allow federally recognized tribes to consolidate multiple federal services into one budget and reporting system. While recognizing that this question requires further legal exploration, they stressed that greater flexibility is urgently needed to braid funding streams in ways that align with community-defined priorities.

OSPI Responses & Commitments

» **Sustaining ONE's continued growth:** Superintendent Reykdal emphasized that the Office of Native Education is funded through the state and affirmed OSPI's ability to maintain its commitments to the office. He also noted that these commitments would hold even in the face of federal-level uncertainties.

» **Federal program vulnerability:** OSPI leaders confirmed that Impact Aid and Head Start are both vulnerable to reductions, acknowledging that the state cannot backfill lost Impact Aid and would struggle to replace Head Start funding, which is particularly vulnerable because it is not forward-funded. While staff reassured participants that current appropriations remain intact, they agreed that these programs represent significant risk points.

» **State program dependency:** Superintendent Reykdal explained that when state budgets shrink, the legislature typically eliminates entire programs rather than applying across-the-board reductions, a decision controlled by lawmakers, not OSPI. This pattern, he acknowledged, increases the risk that programs disproportionately serving Native students will disappear entirely during budget resolutions. However, he committed to compiling and sharing a list of tribe-eligible state education grants to help tribes proactively plan sustainable funding strategies.

» **Funding flexibility:** OSPI staff acknowledged the complexity of incorporating federal programs into 477 plans and agreed that this question requires guidance from legal experts. While they did not provide an explicit commitment, they affirmed that the issue remains an important topic for further exploration and directed tribal leaders to specific resources to help tribes, districts, and schools understand:

- ***How to blend and braid funding through state educational programs;***
- ***How to implement Integrated Student Supports (ISS) protocol to promote student academic success; and***
- ***How federal funds have been allocated to Washington districts across federal title programs.***

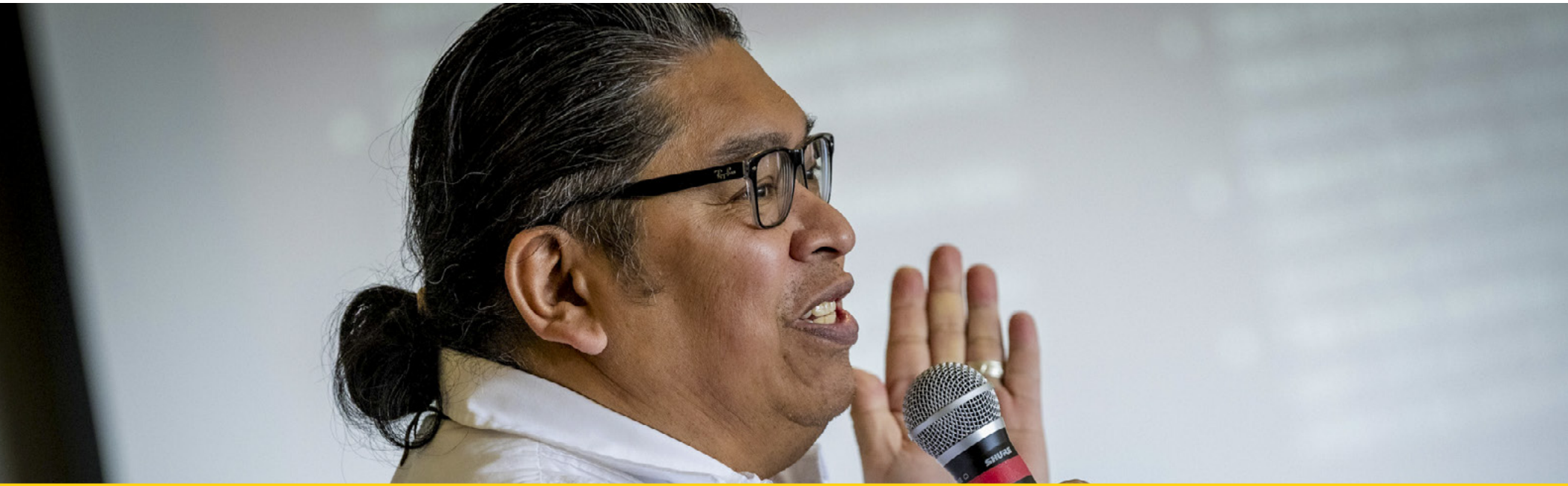
Actionable Next Steps

» **Sustaining ONE's continued growth:** Continue funding and supporting ONE's expanded role, fulfilling the intent of RCW 28A.300.105, which places the office into statute and establishes its responsibility to assist districts in meeting the needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students. This includes sustaining ONE's role as a liaison between OSPI, school districts, tribal governments, compact schools, and Native families.

» **State program dependency:** Compile and maintain a consolidated list of state educational grants available to tribes to strengthen planning and access.

» **Funding flexibility:** Explore legal and policy pathways for incorporating federal education funds such as Impact Aid and Title VI into 477 plans, expanding flexibility for tribal governments.

> *"We can't keep demanding more services and not funding them."*
>
> — Superintendent Chris Reykdal



WELLNESS & BELONGING

Background

Student wellness served as the guiding principle for all discussions, offering the "why" behind other proposed avenues to protect educational sovereignty. Leaders highlighted that the opportunity gaps experienced by Native youth in Washington schools are not accidents but the result of systemic inequities. Native students are disproportionately impacted by chronic absenteeism and lower graduation rates, outcomes often rooted in higher rates of exclusionary discipline practices and curricula that invisibilize their cultures, histories, and identities.

The discussion underscored how Native students' sense of isolation in schools is compounded by the misalignment between standardized, westernized school schedules and seasonal tribal practices such as hunting, fishing, and other migratory activities. When these cultural responsibilities are not honored, students are forced to make painful choices between attending school and participating in the lifeways that sustain their families and communities.

> *"Education strategic plans are completely aligned with being a successful community member."*
>
> — Tammy James (Colville)

At the Summit, leaders emphasized that wellness and belonging must be placed at the center of education: when Native students are affirmed in their identity and see themselves reflected in the classroom, they thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

> *"If you know who you are, you can do anything."*
>
> — Destiney Petty (Colville)

Tribal Concerns

» **Belonging before achievement:** Tribal leaders emphasized that true achievement cannot occur without belonging. They called for schools and systems to replace practices that force students to choose between their cultural identity and academic success, and to embrace belonging as the precondition to learning.

> *"Research tells us that [...] once we belong, then we start to achieve. Our model has been backwards for centuries."*
>
> — Henry Strom (Yakama)

- **Limits of the Healthy Youth Survey:** Discussion participants expressed frustration with Washington's Healthy Youth Survey (HYS), noting that its lengthy timeline for data processing and release means results are available only after key moments for intervention have passed. The program also centralizes analysis away from local contexts, frequently suppresses American Indian/Alaska Native student data due to FERPA limits on small samples, and provides no built-in mechanism for community-based interpretation or response.
  - *In contrast, participants pointed to the Planet Youth program, an international youth survey and intervention protocol that helped transform Iceland's youth substance abuse rates from one of Europe's highest to one of its lowest. Planet Youth features a shorter, more focused survey administered annually, with an 8-week turnaround time for data processing. Results are released directly to local communities, who lead interpretation and plan interventions rooted in cultural context.*
  - *Similarly, Washington's North Star survey—an adaptation of the Planet Youth model—poses a promising alternative. North Star preserves the annual cycle and rapid 8-week reporting but emphasizes tribal sovereignty by releasing results directly to tribal leadership. Behavioral data can be paired with cultural knowledge, ceremonies, and community priorities to shape meaningful interventions. Early pilot results are encouraging, but leaders stressed that North Star requires further investment, wider implementation, and additional data sets to realize its full potential and scale.*
- **Addressing the opioid crisis:** Attendees described the devastating impact of the opioid and fentanyl crisis on Native youth and families. They stressed that prevention cannot be punitive or one-size-fits-all, but must draw on cultural practices, Elders' guidance, ceremonies, and cultural practices. At the Summit, leaders uplifted examples such as Canoe Journeys and cultural teachings as interventions that foster both wellness and belonging while healing the isolation that fuels substance use among Native youth.

> *"Elders are our first teachers."*
>
> — Elese Washines (Yakama)

OSPI Responses & Commitments

- **Limits of the Healthy Youth Survey:** Superintendent Reykdal voiced support for HYS alternatives such as North Star and Planet Youth, acknowledging their promise in delivering more timely and locally relevant data. At the same time, he committed to encouraging reliable district participation in the HYS while recognizing its limitations.

- **Addressing the opioid crisis:** OSPI committed to sustaining opioid and fentanyl prevention programs even amid potential budget constraints. Reykdal affirmed that cultural programs, including but not limited to Canoe Journeys and culturally sustaining healing practices, represent effective, evidence-based approaches to substance abuse and harm prevention. This affirmation emphasizes the critical importance of prevention programming grounded in Indigenous Knowledge Systems, cultural identity, and kinship structures, recognizing these culturally rooted practices as essential protective factors for Native students and Tribal communities rather than supplemental programming.

> *"You're making me choose between being in school and being Indian."*
>
> — Maxine Alex (Diné)

Actionable Next Steps

- **Belonging before achievement:** Develop standards for measuring success through belonging and cultural connectedness, alongside academic and behavioral outcomes and benchmarks.
- **Limits of the Healthy Youth Survey:** Support annual North Star surveys with rapid turnaround, ensuring results are released directly to tribes for timely action.
- **Addressing the opioid crisis:** Direct opioid prevention funds toward cultural programs—such as Canoe Journeys and other community-rooted prevention curricula—that connect youth with traditions, Elders, and community healing practices.

CLOSING REMARKS: THE JOURNEY AHEAD

The foundational work accomplished with our state education partners marks a significant and promising start. It is crucial, however, to view these early steps not as a destination, but as the beginning of a much deeper and more transformative journey.

We are establishing a new trajectory—one built on authentic collaboration—to ensure that tribal history, culture, and languages are woven into the very fabric of our state's curriculum. The progress made thus far gives us great optimism for the path ahead. We look forward to building on this momentum and continuing our vital partnership, knowing that the most important work has just begun.

—Meghan Francis, Education Chair, Confederated Colville Tribes

Building and nurturing government-to-government relations is essential. The Tribal Education Leaders Summit was a key step in ensuring tribal education leaders are getting direct access to Washington State's Constitutional Education Officer and staff. We will keep working together to center tribal youth in our mutual work.

—Superintendent Chris Reykdal

I thank you for your honest words, even though they're tough and not exactly what we want to hear. But we know that we are resilient people. We're survivors, and we're always up for the challenge, even though [...] we're not inviting the challenge. But we always overcome.

—Monica Tonasket (Spokane)

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS: AT A GLANCE

Sovereignty, Consultation & Relationships

- ☐ **Proactive advocacy:** Develop coordinated, bipartisan strategies to advance tribal education priorities.
- ☐ **Sustained communication:** Create year-round communication tools (e.g., webinars, annual updates) and support annual TELS events.
- ☐ **Community assessment teaming:** Ensure tribes are included in LAP and ISS assessment teams.
- ☐ **Accountability measures:** Use Affirmation of Tribal Consultation forms as good-faith documentation in processes beyond ESSA.
- ☐ **Multi-district convenings:** Pilot regional convenings co-hosted with tribes, focused on data, consultation, and funding.

Data Sovereignty

- ☐ **Templates and agreements:** Establish a central hub of adaptable MOU/MOA templates for data sharing.
- ☐ **Dashboard access:** Build a Native student dashboard accessible to tribal designees, with disaggregated data where agreements allow.
- ☐ **Federal vs. state reporting:** Provide guidance and PD on coding, reporting, and sovereignty in data governance.
- ☐ **Enrollment processes:** Require 506 forms in all district enrollment packets statewide.
- ☐ **Electronic signatures:** Adopt electronic signatures on Title VI forms to reduce barriers.

Language & Cultural Revitalization

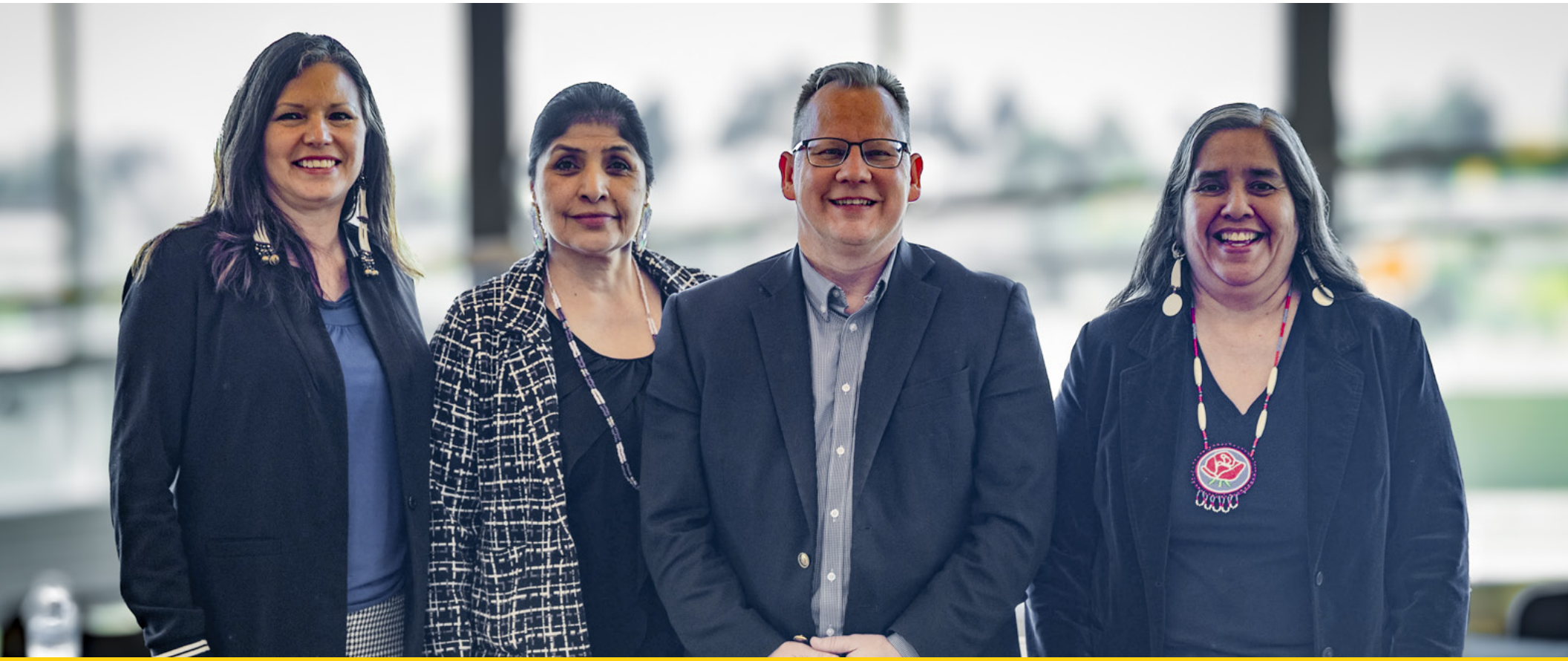
- ☐ **Compensation inequities:** Clarify how tribal language teachers' PD is recognized in certification and pay systems.
- ☐ **Shared responsibility:** Embed the 6Rs (Respect, Responsibility, Relationship, Reciprocity, Relevance, Representation) into program evaluation and accountability.
- ☐ **Clarifying funding rules:** Publish clear examples of allowable Title II-A uses for language/oral tradition professional development.

Funding Resilience

- ☐ **State program dependency:** Maintain a consolidated list of state educational grants accessible to tribes.
- ☐ **Funding flexibility:** Explore legal pathways for incorporating Impact Aid, Title VI, and other funds into 477 plans.

Wellness & Belonging

- ☐ **Belonging before achievement:** Develop standards measuring success through belonging and cultural connectedness.
- ☐ **Healthy Youth Survey alternatives:** Expand North Star surveys with a rapid 8-week turnaround, releasing results directly to tribes.
- ☐ **Opioid crisis response:** Direct prevention funds to cultural programs such as Canoe Journeys and other culturally sustaining healing curricula.



GLOSSARY

477 Plans: Refers to Public Law 102-477, a federal program that allows tribes to consolidate funding from multiple federal sources into a single plan with one reporting system. Its goal is to reduce administrative burden and increase flexibility in how funds are used to meet community-defined priorities. *See also: Impact Aid, Title VI*

506 Form: A federal student eligibility form used to identify American Indian/Alaska Native students for Title VI Indian Education services. *See also: Title VI*

6Rs Framework: A set of guiding principles for Indigenous education: Respect, Responsibility, Relationship, Reciprocity, Relevance, and Representation. Originally articulated by Indigenous scholars and educators, the 6Rs have been adopted across Native education contexts as a framework for centering Indigenous values in teaching, assessment, and partnership.

ATC (Affirmation of Tribal Consultation): A form required under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to document that districts have consulted with tribes. *See also: ESSA, Tribal Consultation*

ATNI (Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians): A regional tribal organization representing tribes across the Pacific Northwest. ATNI passes resolutions on key issues affecting Native tribes across the region. *See also: 506 Form*

Canoe Journey: Intertribal Canoe Journeys are a cultural practice of coastal Pacific Northwest tribes, in which families and communities travel together by canoe to visit host nations, share teachings, and celebrate language, culture, and sovereignty. Canoe journeys embody values of interdependence, resilience, and relationship to the water. Building from this tradition, the Healing of the Canoe (HOC) program is a community-based, culturally grounded prevention and intervention life skills curriculum for tribal youth that builds on the strengths and resources in the community.

CEDARS (Comprehensive Education Data and Research System: Washington's longitudinal data system that collects student-level information from districts. *See also: Data Sovereignty*

CTE (Career and Technical Education): Programs offering students hands-on training and workforce preparation in fields such as health sciences, trades, and technology. Many Native students have leveraged these programs to enter vocations working within or for their own tribal communities, a prospect particularly beneficial when conventional, four-year college pathways don't align with their career aspirations.

Data Sovereignty: The inherent right of tribes to govern the collection, ownership, and application of their own data. Practices such as top-coding and delayed release of survey data undermine this principle by obscuring or erasing Native student experiences. *See also: CEDARS, Top-Coding, Max ID*

ESD (Educational Service District): One of nine regional agencies in Washington that provide support and services to school districts, such as professional development, special education, and fiscal management.

ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act): The main federal K–12 education law, which replaced No Child Left Behind in 2015. It requires districts to consult with tribes when applying for certain federal funds and includes Title I, Title II-A, Title VI, and other programs. *See also: Title II-A, Title VI, ATC*

FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act): A federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. While intended as a safeguard, FERPA's restrictions on reporting small data sets often result in the suppression of American Indian/Alaska Native student data, contributing to chronic undercounting. *See also: Data Sovereignty, Top-Coding*

FPLCOT (First Peoples' Language, Culture, and Oral Traditions Certificate): A Washington state teaching certificate that authorizes individuals identified by tribes to teach tribal languages and cultures. Unlike standard endorsements, FPLCOT certificates often do not carry equitable pay or recognition in district systems. *See also: PESB*

Head Start: A federally funded early childhood program that provides education, health, and family services. Tribal leaders described Head Start as a lifeline for Native communities but also highly vulnerable to federal budget cuts.

HYS (Healthy Youth Survey): Washington's statewide survey on youth health behaviors, administered every two years to middle and high school students. The survey is relatively lengthy, and its results are processed centrally at the state level. Data are typically released 128–18 months after administration, and results for small populations are often suppressed to comply with privacy protections. *See also: North Star, Planet Youth*

Impact Aid: A federal program that provides direct funds to school districts that lose property tax revenue due to the presence of tax-exempt federal or tribal lands.

ISS (Integrated Student Supports): A Washington state program designed to address barriers to learning by integrating academic, social-emotional, health, and cultural supports. *See also: LAP*

LAP (Learning Assistance Program): Washington's state-funded program for supplemental instruction in reading, math, and other core subjects, which can be used to support tribal language instruction if consultation identifies a need supported by data. *See also: ISS, Title II-A*

Max ID: A data identification method used in Washington State to ensure accurate counts of Native students. Because federal reporting requires each student to be assigned a single race or ethnicity, Native students who also identify as Hispanic or "Two or More Races" are not included in the federal Native category. Max ID addresses this undercount by identifying all students with Native identity before they are collapsed into federal categories. *See also: Top-coding, Data sovereignty*

MOA / MOU (Memorandum of Agreement / Memorandum of Understanding): Formal agreements outlining the terms of collaboration between tribes and districts. *See also: WSSDA*

North Star: Washington's adaptation of the international Planet Youth model for youth wellness and prevention. Like Planet Youth, North Star uses a shorter, focused survey administered annually with an eight-week turnaround for results. What makes it distinct is its emphasis on tribal sovereignty: results are released directly to tribal leadership, allowing tribes to pair student behavior data with cultural knowledge, ceremonies, and community priorities when designing prevention strategies. Early pilot results are promising, but additional investment and broader implementation are needed to expand its impact. *See also: Planet Youth, HYS (Healthy Youth Survey)*

ONE (Office of Native Education): A division of Washington's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) dedicated to serving Native students and strengthening tribal–state educational partnerships. *See also: OSPI*

OSPI (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction): Washington's state department of education, led by the elected Superintendent of Public Instruction. OSPI oversees K–12 public schools, allocates state and federal education funds, and is responsible for consultation with tribes under RCW 43.376. *See also: ONE, RCW 43.376*

PESB (Professional Educator Standards Board): The Washington state board that sets policy and requirements for teacher certification and professional standards. *See also: FPLCOT*

Planet Youth: An international youth survey and intervention model that originated in Iceland, which pairs short, annual student surveys with rapid data release to local communities for culturally based interventions. *See also: North Star, HYS*

RCW 43.376 (Revised Code of Washington, Chapter 43.376: Washington's 2008 law requiring state agencies to engage in government-to-government consultation with tribes, provide training, and report on consultation efforts. *See also: OSPI, Tribal Consultation*

Title II-A: A section of ESSA that provides federal funding for professional development to strengthen teacher and school leader effectiveness, which can be used to support PD in tribal languages and oral traditions when identified through consultation. *See also: ESSA, LAP*

Title VI (Indian Education Formula Grants): Part of ESSA that provides federal funds to support programs serving Native students. Title VI eligibility requires a 506 form. *See also: ESSA, 506 Form*

Title Programs: Federal education programs authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), reauthorized most recently as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Each "Title" refers to a different funding stream with a specific focus, such as Title I for low-income students, Title II-A for teacher professional development, and Title VI for Native education. Together, Title Programs make up a significant portion of federal support for K–12 schools. *See also: ESSA, Title II-A, Title VI*

Top-Coding: In student data reporting, the practice of collapsing small racial/ethnic groups into larger aggregate categories. For Native students, this often means those who identify as both Native and another race are counted only in the "Two or More Races" or non-Native category, rather than in American Indian/Alaska Native. While this practice is rooted in FERPA requirements preventing possible identification of individual student data in smaller data streams, it contributes to the systemic undercounting of Native students and obscures their educational outcomes. *See also: Max ID, Data Sovereignty, CEDARS, FERPA*

Tribal Consultation: The formal, government-to-government process through which tribes engage with federal, state, and local agencies on matters that affect their interests. In Washington, consultation is codified in RCW 43.376, requiring agencies to make early and meaningful efforts to consult with tribes, provide training, and report on these relationships. Consultation is not a checklist but an ongoing relationship built on trust and respect, and only official representatives of tribal governments can participate in consultation. *See also: ATC, RCW 43.376*

Tribal Sovereignty: The inherent authority of tribes to govern themselves as sovereign nations and make decisions about their people, lands, languages, and cultures. Tribal sovereignty is recognized in treaties, affirmed by federal law, and honored in Washington through government-to-government consultation requirements like RCW 43.376. *See also: Tribal Consultation, Data Sovereignty, RCW 43.376*

Tribal–District Unique Agreements: Formal agreements between Washington school districts and federally recognized tribes that outline how the district will consult with tribes and serve Native students. Required under state law, these agreements are designed to reflect the government-to-government relationship and the unique educational needs of Native students in each community. *See also: Tribal Consultation, ATC*

WSSDA (Washington State School Directors' Association): A state association that provides training, policy, and governance resources to school boards. *See also: MOA/MOU*

Washington Office of Superintendent of

PUBLIC INSTRUCTION