



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: The State of Native Education 2025

Authorizing Legislation: RCW 28A.300.105

Henry Strom

**Assistant Superintendent of Office of Native
Education**

Prepared by:

- **Shandy Abrahamson**, Director
shandy.abrahamson@k12.wa.us | 360-725-6160

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2024–2025 reporting period marks a significant year of progress and transformation for Native education in Washington State. The Office of Native Education (ONE) provides assistance to school districts in meeting the educational needs of American Indian and Alaskan Native (AI/AN) students. ONE serves as a liaison between OSPI and school districts, tribal governments, State-Tribal Education Compact schools (STECs), tribal schools, Native communities, parents/guardians of Native children, and other groups and individuals. [RCW 28A.300.105](#) places the Office of Native Education into statute.

This report documents key accomplishments, challenges, and recommendations as required under RCW 28A.300.105.

Major accomplishments during this period include the inaugural Tribal Education Leaders Summit (TELS), significant expansion of tribal consultation training reaching over 1,100 education leaders, development of the Native Literacy Framework, continuation of the Fentanyl/Opioid Prevention Pilot program, and strengthened implementation of the John McCoy (Iulilaš) Since Time Immemorial curriculum across the state.

Tribal Sovereignty

Washington State is home to 29 federally recognized tribes, each exercising inherent sovereign authority to govern their own affairs. This self-governance includes the authority to manage education, healthcare, natural resources, and other essential services. The state's relationship with these tribes is grounded in treaties signed in the mid-1800s, which are recognized as the supreme law of the land under the United States Constitution.

Educational sovereignty represents a critical component of tribal self-determination. The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 (Public Law 93-638) established the legal framework for tribes to assume greater control over programs and services, including education. In Washington, State-Tribal Education Compact (STEC) schools exemplify this principle, operating with tribally controlled curricula and governance structures while maintaining accountability for academic outcomes.

Treaties and the Duty to Educate Native Students

The education of Native children was a central concern of treaty negotiations in Washington Territory. While treaty language varies, the duty of the United States government to establish and maintain schools for treaty tribes is embedded in these foundational agreements. Senator Daniel Inouye, longtime leader of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, emphasized that treaty commitments were made "in perpetuity" and that our "preeminent challenge today is to assure the integrity of our treaty commitments."

Historical Context: Boarding Schools and Inter-generational Trauma

American Indian and Alaska Native educational systems were disrupted through federal policies that removed children from their families and communities. Traditional oral modes of education—training youth through prayer, storytelling, memory skills, and listening—were systematically interrupted. The boarding school era, lasting from the late 19th through much of the 20th century, prohibited Native languages and cultural practices, creating inter-generational trauma that continues to affect Native communities today.

Washington is among the first states to formally address this history. The state budget includes a legislative directive for the Office of the Attorney General to study the impacts of boarding schools through a truth and reconciliation model, with an advisory committee preparing recommendations. This ongoing work toward healing informs our approach to Native education and our commitment to culturally grounded educational practices.

HONORING NATIVE CULTURE & IDENTITY

Office of Native Education

The Office of Native Education serves under OSPI as a liaison among school districts, tribal governments, State-Tribal Education Compact schools, tribal schools, regional educational service districts, Native communities, parents and guardians of Native children, and other stakeholders. Our primary goal is helping schools meet the educational needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students. To achieve this, ONE:

- Administers grants supporting tribal curriculum development and language revitalization
- Facilitates government-to-government relationships between education agencies and tribes
- Provides professional development and training on tribal sovereignty, historical and cultural pedagogies
- Supports implementation of state legislation including HB 1426 and SSB 5252
- Develops culturally grounded literacy frameworks and prevention programs

Grant Distribution 2024–2025

During this reporting period, ONE distributed significant funding to support Native education programs across Washington:

- John McCoy (luliláš) Since Time Immemorial (JMLSTI) funding supported tribal curriculum development and educator professional development across nine recipients
- Tribal Language grants enabled instruction in 16 distinct languages across 25 recipients
- Fentanyl/Opioid Prevention Pilot supported five STEC schools: Chief Leschi School, Chief Kitsap Academy, Muckleshoot Tribal School, Pascal Sherman Indian School, and Quileute Tribal School

Washington State Native American Education Advisory Committee

The [Washington State Native American Education Advisory Committee](#) (WSNAEAC) reconvened in March 2019 to promote leadership and the unique principles and effective practices of Native American education, which helps to assure academic success and cultural integrity at the community, school, state, and tribal levels. The committee consists of 22 members nominated by tribes and tribal organizations to provide consultation with OSPI on matters and issues related to the well-being and achievement of American Indian and Alaska Native students who attend public, tribal compact, and tribal schools in Washington State.

The advisory met with ONE and State Superintendent Chris Reykdal to discuss funding topics such as dual language, Seal of Biliteracy, professional development for Native youth and Tribal languages, dual credit, transportation, meals, and other areas requesting funding. But the most concerning topic of

advisement was the [proposal for Lifting Up American Indian and Alaska Native Students Through a State Match of Federal Title VI Grant Funds](#), 2025–27 Operating Budget Decision Package, which would support the efforts of local educational agencies, Indian tribes, and organizations, and other entities in developing elementary school and secondary school programs for Indian students.

John McCoy (Iulilaš) Since Time Immemorial Curriculum

The John McCoy (Iulilaš) Since Time Immemorial (JMLSTI) program supports integration of tribal history, culture, and government into K–12 curricula as required by state law. Renamed in 2024 through House Bill 1879 to honor the late Representative John McCoy, JMLSTI is Washington's required tribal sovereignty education curriculum. The following is a brief history of curriculum bills passed by the legislature:

- [HB 1495](#) (2005): Requiring that Washington's tribal history be taught in the common schools.
- [SB 5433](#) (2015): Requiring Washington's tribal history, culture, and government to be taught in the common schools.
- [HB 1332](#) (2023): Supporting public school instruction in tribal sovereignty and federally recognized Indian tribes.
- [HB 1879](#) (2024): Naming the curriculum used to inform students about tribal history, culture, and government after John McCoy (Iulilaš).

During the 2024–25 year, JMLSTI training series served as a powerful platform for fostering collaboration between tribal nations and school districts across Washington state. These trainings emphasized the importance of tribal sovereignty, cultural understanding, and educational partnerships, building stronger, more inclusive learning environments for all students.

Eight tribal nations—Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Nez Perce Tribe, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, Puyallup Tribe, Skokomish Indian Tribe, Suquamish Tribe, and Tulalip Tribes—partnered with ONE to present their unique histories, cultures, and perspectives. These sessions were designed to deepen educators' understanding of tribal communities and to support the implementation of JMLSTI.

Training Highlights

- Strong partnership development between tribes and schools: Multiple districts collaborated directly with tribal communities to host training events
- Professional development: Several sessions offered clock hours, supporting educators' ongoing professional growth
- Cultural immersion: Events held at tribal venues like the Muckleshoot Tribal College, Port Gamble S'Klallam Longhouse, and Skokomish Community Center provided authentic cultural experiences and direct engagement with tribal leaders and educators
- New Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) unit and lesson plans developed, featuring a seasonal calendar for educator access

Implementation Data

Data from the State Board of Education's Basic Education Compliance Survey demonstrates steady progress in JMLSTI adoption across Washington's school districts. In the 2024–25 school year, 85% of districts reported adopting the John McCoy (Iulilaš) Since Time Immemorial Curriculum, up from 56% in 2021–22. Additionally, 70% of districts reported collaborating with federally recognized Indian tribes and neighboring tribes during the 2023–24 school year.

This year's JMLSTI training series not only strengthened relationships between tribes and schools but also laid the groundwork for continued collaboration, mutual respect, and culturally responsive education across the region.

State-Tribal Education Compact Schools

State-Tribal Education Compact (STEC) schools represent the exercise of educational sovereignty by Washington's tribal nations. These tribally governed schools operate under agreements with OSPI that allow them to develop curricula rooted in cultural priorities while maintaining state accountability standards. Current STEC schools include Wa He Lut Indian School, Lummi Nation Schools, Chief Kitsap Academy, Muckleshoot Tribal School, Quileute Tribal School, and Chief Leschi School.

OSPI Support for STECs

While ONE performs many functions and supports Tribes and Tribal schools, there is extensive individualized work happening across OSPI within many programs that support STECs. Teams across the agency collaborate with STECs in specialized areas:

- School Apportionment and Financial Services work with STEC business managers to understand reporting requirements and maximize funding opportunities
- Child Nutrition Services provides knowledge and support for reporting requirements and program-level funding opportunities
- Transportation works collaboratively with STECs to support schools that receive buses directly from the Federal Government
- Facilities team coordinates with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) and STECs for building maintenance and upgrade opportunities
- Special Education provides support and tracking to ensure STECs can obtain funding and resources
- Homelessness and Foster Care teams work across the agency with STECs on the unique needs of Tribal communities
- Assessment works with BIE and STECs to ensure schools have options to choose assessments that work best for their curriculum and can provide waivers when schools choose State assessment models over Federal models

Data System Advancements

Significant advancements have been made between OSPI and the BIE to streamline data reporting for STECs. Previously, STECs were required to enter the same data into both the federal Native American Student Information System (NASIS) and the state's Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS), often requiring separate student information systems.

The goal of this project was to make NASIS the only student information system needed for schools reporting to both BIE and the state. The initial work has been completed. STECs now have the option to build ad hoc reporting filters to match CEDARS data reporting requirements, with data exporting in formats that CEDARS can accept. The filters are designed to allow schools to respond to changing data requirements without expensive vendor contracts.

Teams are on standby to support STECs in this transition, providing training and support as schools opt in to implement their filters and complete testing.

Ongoing Challenges

Despite progress, several challenges remain in supporting STECs:

- Different schools seek different supports, requiring programs to navigate complex needs, especially without dedicated Tribal liaisons
- Staff turnover at both OSPI and within STEC schools creates knowledge and relationship gaps that disrupt services and funding
- STECs must individually track which programs to contact for which services, creating high workloads for both schools and OSPI teams
- Unlike school districts and charters, STECs lack shared resource pools similar to ESDs and Commissions

Tribal Education Leaders Summit

The inaugural Washington State Tribal Education Leaders Summit (TELS) convened April 17–18, 2025, at Washington State University. This historic gathering brought together elected tribal officials, Tribal Education Directors, and OSPI leadership including Superintendent Chris Reykdal for meaningful government-to-government consultation.

The Summit emerged in response to calls from tribal leaders at previous Centennial Accord meetings for dialogue guided by tribally led priorities. Planning was coordinated by a committee of tribal leaders and state liaisons from OSPI and the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs.

Key Discussion Priorities

- Examining impacts of federal policy changes on Native education
- Exploring student data and accountability through tribal partnerships
- Advancing tribal language revitalization and strengthening Native identity

Guiding Principles Established

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

OSPI Commitments from TELS

- Continue building internal capacity while ensuring relationships guide structure in collaboration with tribes
- Commit to annual TELS events (2026 Summit planned for University of Washington)
- Pursue legislative engagement on opioid recovery funding, JMLSTI expansion, and data-sharing agreements
- Promote ED506 form inclusion in all district registration packets
- Collaborate with PESB and FPLCOT to expand educator certification pathways
- Develop AI/AN-specific data dashboard advancing tribal data sovereignty

Tribal Consultation

The Tribal Consultation Program ensures meaningful opportunities for tribal governments to provide input on education policies impacting American Indian and Alaska Native student success. The program implements Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA) and state legislation requirements for tribal consultation.

SSB 5252 Implementation: Strengthening Tribal Consultation

SSB 5252 requires school board members, superintendents, and staff at districts required to perform tribal consultation under Title VI of ESSA to complete a 3-hour Strengthening Tribal Consultation training.

2024 Accomplishments:

- 274 directors and superintendents trained across 42 districts
- 98% completion rate in inaugural mandatory year
- 13 training options offered, including online modules developed with Region 16 Comprehensive Center
- 8 convenings hosted with Washington State School Directors Association (2023–2025)

HB 1426 Implementation: Government-to-Government Relationships

HB 1426 requires administrators renewing certificates on or after July 1, 2023 to attend a 5-hour Government-to-Government Relationships Training covering Introduction to Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State, Boarding Schools and Historical Trauma, Identifying Native Students in Public

Schools, Agents of Change: School Leadership Behaviors and Dispositions, and Creation of Government-to-Government Systems.

Certification Year 2024-2025 Results:

- 902 recertifying administrators completed training
- Multiple delivery methods offered: in-person, hybrid, and virtual options
- New CTE modules developed and presented to Tribal Leaders Congress and Governor's Office of Indian Affairs

Combined Impact: A total of 1,176 education leaders have been certified in government-to-government relationships and tribal consultation practices, representing significant statewide capacity building for culturally responsive education leadership.

Native Student Literacy

Legislative Authorization and Funding

The legislature appropriated \$345,000 of the general fund for fiscal year 2024 and \$705,000 for fiscal year 2025, provided solely for the Office of Native Education to convene a work group to develop supports necessary to serve American Indian and Alaska Native students identified as needing additional literacy supports.

The work group is required to include representation from Washington's federally recognized tribes and federally recognized tribes with reserved treaty rights in Washington. Activities include conducting tribal consultations, developing best practices, engaging in professional learning, and developing curricula and resources for school districts and state-tribal education compact schools.

Native Literacy Work Group

ONE identified and recruited educators from across the state with expertise in literacy, including Native educators, non-Native educators with experience serving high populations of Native students, general and special education teachers, building and district leaders, Indigenous language speakers, and representation from both eastern and western Washington.

The work group met virtually throughout winter and spring to analyze data and discuss best practices. TWO Native Parent Literacy Nights were hosted on the east and west sides of the state, featuring Native storytelling to center education and cultural values, parent surveys, and distribution of Indigenous-authored books to attendees. The year culminated with an in-person convening of over 50 Native literacy leaders from across the state in May 2025.

Partner Districts and Schools

Partner School Districts (10): Inchelium, Mount Adams, Marysville, Taholah, La Conner, Wapato, Keller, Toppenish, Grand Coulee, and Cape Flattery

Partner Elementary Schools (15): Inchelium, Harrah, Quil Ceda Tulalip, Taholah, La Conner, Adams, Satus, Wellpinit, Keller, Valley View, Kirkwood, Garfield, Lake Roosevelt, and Neah Bay

Total Beneficiaries in 2023–24: 42 participants in the Native Literacy Work Group, plus all students and educators in partner schools

Native Literacy Framework

Developed through two years of collaboration with Native literacy leaders, the Native Literacy Framework honors literacy as more than reading and writing. The framework affirms that Indigenous storytelling, oral tradition, land-based learning, and identity formation are integral to Indigenous literacy.

Core Elements:

- Braiding knowledge systems: Integrating Indigenous storytelling and land-based learning
- Native ways of knowing: Rooting learning in relationship to land, community, and story
- Weaving literacy and language: Connecting heritage language instruction to stronger literacy skills and cultural confidence

SB 5950 Deliverables

- Created Native Literacy Framework with culturally grounded principles and indicators
- Established statewide professional learning networks for educators serving AI/AN students
- Distributed culturally affirming literacy supports to all 295 school districts and STEC schools

Native Literacy and Tribal Language Convening

From May 6–9, 2025, OSPI hosted a four-day convening at Spokane Tribe Casino that directly advanced SB 5950 Native Literacy Work Group objectives. The convening brought together tribal educators, fluent language speakers, and literacy specialists to develop best practices and culturally affirming curricula for American Indian and Alaska Native students.

Research and lived experience affirm that students who maintain and engage with their heritage language build stronger literacy skills and deeper cultural confidence. This work directly supports literacy development by providing districts with literacy supports that integrate Indigenous pedagogy, tribal community values, and Traditional Knowledge as foundations for reading and writing success.

Program Evaluation and Major Findings

The first year focused on understanding the scope of challenges facing educational systems in meeting the needs of Native learners and their communities. Key accomplishments include:

- Joined the OSPI state literacy team to represent Native learners in statewide literacy efforts
- Developed direction for partner schools to assist in preparing for research-based literacy practices

- Focused professional development on Kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers in partner districts
- Established connections with educators across the state for expanded recruitment in subsequent years

A critical finding is that the historical trauma of boarding schools and its impact on Native communities remains very present in students and families. Social and emotional learning support will be integrated into literacy efforts moving forward.

Future Opportunities

Through inclusion in statewide literacy efforts, ONE has strengthened understanding of research-based literacy practices, fostered strong relationships with agency programs related to literacy, and narrowed focus with a clear plan to support educators in partner districts. Work is underway to assess elementary schools demonstrating strong practices, with summaries to be included in the final report at year's close.

State Funding History

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2024	\$345,000	\$316,749
2025	\$705,000	In Progress

Source: [FY25 proviso report KB2 additional native literacy supports work.](#)

Tribal Languages

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 trauma—the systematic suppression of Native languages during the boarding school era—yet language revitalization persists and grows, led by tribal nations and knowledge keepers.

The Tribal Language Grant program launched in September with 26 applicants proposing high-quality language programs. Grants enabled instruction in 16 distinct languages across 25 recipients, demonstrating strong collaboration between LEAs and their tribal partners.

The Tribal Language Grant program supports language revitalization and preservation efforts across Washington State by providing financial resources to school districts, State-Tribal Education Compact (STEC) schools, and Tribal education departments. The program expands access to Tribal language instruction for Native students, helping to revitalize endangered languages while developing culturally responsive educational programs that integrate Tribal languages and cultural knowledge into K–12 education.

FY25 Program Accomplishments

In FY25, the program distributed \$940,000 in grant funding (11% increase from prior year) supporting 25 school districts and Tribal education entities serving 16 Tribal Nations and 10 distinct Tribal languages. The program added three new grant recipients—Paschal Sherman Indian School, Port Angeles School District, and Reardan-Edwall School District—while expanding funding to several existing recipients. Grant recipients employed 53 Tribal language educators certified through the First Peoples’ Language, Culture & Oral Traditions (FPLCOT) certificate program, which has grown to 229 certificates held by 126 unique educators representing 14 Tribal Nations and 23 distinct language and cultural endorsements. The program reached approximately 75 schools across the state. Two grantees awarded eight Seals of Biliteracy in Ichishkiin (Yakama) and Lushootseed languages, demonstrating measurable student achievement in Tribal language proficiency.

Grant funds supported comprehensive language programming including educator development and training, K–12 course expansion, language immersion and dual language models, curriculum development with cultural programming, afterschool programs and family engagement activities, digital curriculum materials and proficiency assessments, Seal of Biliteracy pathways, and dual credit opportunities.

Program Challenges

Grantees reported significant technical difficulties with the inaugural year of the Education Grant Management System (EGMS), including challenges with user roles, application navigation, and management of primary points of contact. These technical barriers created additional administrative burden for Tribal Nations, STEC schools, and school districts accessing grant funding. The program did not collect comprehensive student enrollment or outcome data in FY25, limiting the ability to fully assess program impact on student achievement and wellness.

Future Opportunities

Future program enhancement should prioritize robust Tribal consultation that honors language and cultural sovereignty in accordance with government-to-government relationships between Washington State and sovereign Tribal governments. Enhanced data collection on student enrollment, language proficiency levels, attendance patterns, and student wellness outcomes would provide valuable insights into the correlation between Tribal language and cultural implementation and student success. Addressing technical barriers in grant management systems would reduce administrative burden on grant recipients, allowing greater focus on program implementation and student outcomes. Continued investment in the FPLCOT certificate program will build educator capacity and ensure qualified instructors are available to meet growing demand for Tribal language instruction.

Key Concerns from Tribal Education Leaders Summit Discussions:

- Compensation inequities for tribal language teachers holding First Peoples' Language, Culture and Oral Traditions (FPLCOT) certifications
- Need for shared responsibility between tribes and state for language preservation
- Clarification needed on funding rules for programs such as LAP and ISS for tribal language instruction

Fentanyl/Opioid Prevention

At the 2023 Centennial Accord, tribal leaders expressed deep concern about the epidemic impact of fentanyl and opioid use in Indian Country. In response, HB 1956 directed OSPI to collaborate with the Department of Health and Health Care Authority to develop age-appropriate substance use prevention and awareness materials.

Pilot Program Implementation

ONE implemented a pilot grant program with five STEC schools: Chief Leschi School, Chief Kitsap Academy, Muckleshoot Tribal School, Pascal Sherman Indian School, and Quileute Tribal School. The pilot emphasized that culturally specific prevention strategies rooted in Indigenous identity and ancestral knowledge are most effective for Native communities.

The pilot confirmed that prevention efforts must be grounded in cultural strengths and sovereignty of Native communities. STEC schools demonstrated that culturally grounded education fosters resilience, identity, and wellness among Native youth.

Key Findings and Recommendations

- Support Healing of the Canoe and other Washington State tribal curriculum expansion
- Recognize culturally grounded curricula as core prevention infrastructure
- Support tribal-led evaluation and knowledge sharing
- Direct opioid prevention funds toward cultural programs that connect youth with traditions, Elders, and community healing practices

Student Outcomes

Max ID: Accurate Data for Native Students

Federal policy on ethnicity and race data collection creates three basic categories of Native students within Washington's Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS): Native non-Hispanic, Native-Hispanic, and Two or More Races. Only students identified as Native non-Hispanic are displayed on the Washington State Report Card for attendance, graduation, assessments, and other metrics.

To address this undercounting, Washington advocates for "Maximum ID" (Max ID)—a method ensuring every student with Native identity is counted before data—is collapsed into federal categories. This approach ensures accurate representation of Native students and supports appropriate resource allocation.

TELS Commitments on Data Sovereignty:

- Develop AI/AN-specific data dashboard accessible to tribal designees
- Issue bulletins recommending districts include 506 forms in all enrollment packets
- Establish a central hub of adaptable MOU/MOA templates for data sharing
- Update state guidance to allow electronic signatures on Title VI forms

Comprehensive Student Outcomes Data (Maximum Identification Approach)

This section presents a comprehensive analysis of educational experiences and outcomes for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students in Washington State, utilizing the Maximum Identification (Max ID) methodology to address underrepresentation in federal reporting. The Max ID approach ensures every student with Native identity is counted before data is collapsed into federal categories.

Executive Summary of Key Findings

Enrollment Trends

- AI/AN student enrollment declined by 23% over six years (from 64,024 to 49,202), but the rate of decline is slowing, with the most recent year-over-year decline at just 2.4%.
- The composition of the AI/AN student population is shifting, with students identifying as Two or More Races now representing the largest share (37.1%).
- Students identifying as AI/AN and Hispanic declined at an average rate of over 9% per year, while Non-Hispanic and Two or More Races students declined more gradually at around 2-2.5% annually.

Assessment Performance

- AI/AN students demonstrated resilience and recovery in academic achievement post-pandemic. Math proficiency (Level 2+) rose from a pandemic low of 36.3% in 2020–21 to 43.4% in 2023–24.
- Level 4 (advanced) math performance nearly doubled since 2020–21, from 4.4% to 8.2%, showing significant gains in higher proficiency levels.
- Science proficiency remained stable between 47.8% and 50.5% over the five-year period, with Level 3 proficiency surpassing pre-pandemic levels.
- ELA proficiency rates maintained consistency between 53.4% and 62.3%, with Level 3 and Level 4 rates in 2023–24 nearly back to pre-pandemic levels.

School Quality and Student Success Indicators

- **Regular Attendance:** AI/AN student regular attendance increased from 55.9% in 2022–23 to 58.9% in 2023–24, with AI/AN Non-Hispanic students experiencing the highest recovery rate at 6.6% year-over-year improvement.
- **9th Grade On-Track:** Overall AI/AN on-track rate increased from 52.7% to 54.9% (2022–23 to 2023–24). AI/AN Non-Hispanic students showed the strongest growth with a 10.3% year-over-year increase, while AI/AN Two or More Races students increased by 6.4%.
- **Dual Credit Participation:** AI/AN participation rose to 58.6% in 2023–24, a 6.1% increase from the previous year. AI/AN Non-Hispanic students increased participation by 9.6%, and AI/AN Two or More Races students by 7.4%.
- **Discipline:** The overall AI/AN discipline rate increased from 5.8% to 6.1% (2022–23 to 2023–24), but AI/AN Non-Hispanic students experienced a slight decrease (-3.2%), suggesting positive effects of interventions.

Graduation and Dropout Rates

- Graduation rates for AI/AN students remained stable at around 79–80%, with the 2023–24 rate at 79.1%.
- Dropout rates declined sharply to 8.9% in 2023–24, down from 12.1% in 2018–19.
- Students identifying as AI/AN and Two or More Races have consistently graduated at rates close to or above 80% since 2019–20, nearly matching statewide levels in recent years.

Detailed Student Outcome Tables

Table 1: AI/AN Student Enrollment Trends (2018–19 to 2023–24)

School Year	Total State	AI/AN Max ID	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Two+ Races
2018–19	1,189,830	64,024	15,360	27,967	20,697
2019–20	1,191,058	61,557	15,109	25,926	20,522
2020–21	1,146,656	55,872	15,089	21,537	19,246
2021–22	1,148,088	52,419	14,437	19,233	18,749
2022–23	1,150,009	50,419	13,999	17,989	18,431
2023–24	1,153,523	49,202	13,791	17,193	18,218

Source: CEDARS. Table shows six-year enrollment trends revealing a 23% overall decline with shifting subgroup composition.

Table 2: Mathematics Assessment Performance (SBAC Level 2+)

School Year	All Students	AI/AN Max ID	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Two+ Races
2018–19	69.8%	52.2%	45.6%	48.6%	62.1%
2020–21	54.8%	36.3%	29.4%	32.2%	46.3%
2021–22	59.4%	41.2%	33.9%	37.3%	50.9%
2022–23	60.2%	42.5%	35.3%	38.5%	51.9%
2023–24	60.3%	43.4%	36.1%	39.6%	52.6%

Source: CEDARS. Shows percentage of students scoring at foundational level and above on SBAC Math assessments, demonstrating post-pandemic recovery.

Table 3: 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rates (2018–19 to 2023–24)

School Year	All Students	AI/AN Max ID	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Two+ Races
2018–19	80.9%	75.6%	70.4%	77.1%	76.7%
2019–20	82.9%	80.4%	77.4%	81.2%	81.1%
2020–21	82.5%	77.9%	72.1%	80.2%	78.9%
2021–22	82.3%	79.9%	75.8%	82.2%	79.6%
2022–23	83.6%	80.7%	78.6%	80.8%	82.2%
2023–24	82.8%	79.1%	77.2%	76.8%	82.9%

Source: CEDARS. Shows stable graduation rates around 79-80% for AI/AN students, with Two or More Races subgroup consistently graduating at rates near or above 80%.

Analysis and Conclusions

Despite persistent challenges in attendance and discipline, the overall trends in academic achievement and graduation rates underscore the resilience and recovery of AI/AN students. The data reveals several critical insights that should inform policy and practice:

Strengths and Progress

- Post-pandemic recovery in assessment performance, with notable gains in higher proficiency levels (Level 4 math performance nearly doubled)
- Accelerated growth in dual credit participation, indicating increasing interest in postsecondary opportunities

- Stabilizing enrollment trends, with rate of decline slowing significantly from 9% to 2.4%
- Consistent graduation rates near 80%, demonstrating system-wide commitment to Native student success

Areas Requiring Continued Focus

- Regular attendance rates remain below statewide averages, requiring culturally responsive interventions
- Discipline rates continue to be disproportionately higher for AI/AN students, though the rate of increase has slowed
- Achievement gaps persist across all assessments, particularly for AI/AN Non-Hispanic students
- Understanding the root causes of enrollment decline requires deeper partnership with Tribal Nations

These shifts in underlying enrollment patterns and student outcomes underscore the importance of sustained, government-to-government partnership with Tribal Nations to ensure that Native students—in all their diversity—are visible in data, honored in policy, and supported in practice.

Complete detailed analysis and additional data tables available in: Washington State American Indian/Alaska Native Student Outcomes: A Maximum Identification Approach. Prepared for the 2025 Washington State Centennial Accord. Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, October 2025.

The State of Native Education Opportunity Gap Study in Washington State

The [Native American Education Opportunity Gap Study in Washington State](#) is the first extensive follow-up to the seminal 2008 From Where the Sun Rises Report, which directed OSPI's Office of Native Education to develop statewide goals for better serving Native American students and communities. This study analyzes the current educational opportunity gap for Native American students through investment from Tribal communities and Washington State. The findings provide actionable data to inform educators and policymakers working to enhance educational policies, practices, and programs for Native students across the state. The Office of Native Education would like to recognize Dr. Zoe HighEagle Strong and her team for their commitment to Native Education and the honorable task of conducting this study.

Study Overview and Historical Context

This study builds upon the foundational 2008 *From Where the Sun Rises* report by Dr. Michael Pavel and colleagues, which was funded through Washington State Proviso sponsored by Senator Claudia Kauffman. The original report documented opportunity gaps, highlighted persistent disparities, and recommended strategies for meaningful improvement rooted in Tribal perspectives and sovereignty. The 2008 report stemmed from Native American education leaders, educators, and families recognizing the disparity in achievement gaps between Native and non-Native students, as well as the lack of transparent educational data rendering Native students "invisible" in policies and evidence-based practices.

The current statewide study examines systemic factors contributing to the persistent educational achievement gap for Native American students in Washington state. Central to the study is the analysis of government-to-government relationships between Tribes and school districts (RCW 28A.345.070), specifically the implementation of RCW 28A.320.170, which requires the inclusion of tribal history, culture, and governance curriculum in public schools. The study pursued five primary objectives: (1) evaluate progress since the 2008 report, (2) assess government-to-government collaboration and RCW 28A.345.070 implementation, (3) evaluate John McCoy Since Time Immemorial (JMLSTI) curriculum implementation, (4) analyze language and cultural education efforts, and (5) address the educational opportunity gap while aligning with the state's ESSA Consolidated Plan.

Research Methodology: Culturally Grounded Four-Phase Approach

The study employed a culturally grounded, Indigenous mixed methods approach incorporating qualitative data collection, Indigenous knowledge systems, and reciprocal engagement across four phases:

Phase 1: Co-Creation of Study Design—The project team consulted with Tribal leaders, educators, and OSPI Office of Native Education staff at key convenings to refine the study design, evaluation priorities, research questions, and identification of key individuals to interview and exemplary programs for inclusion.

Phase 2: Data Collection and Management—The team invited stakeholders to attend 14 statewide listening sessions via Zoom covering topics like JMLSTI, Policy and Legislation, Language and Culture Education, and State Tribal Education Compact Schools. Using a synergistic conversation style grounded in storytelling, reciprocal dialogue, and collaborative knowledge construction, the study team recorded sessions, collected participant-designed posters, written responses, and field notes stored securely. All materials were uploaded to ATLAS.ti qualitative analysis software.

Phase 3: Qualitative Coding, Joint Analysis, and Co-Authorship—The research team coded and themed contributions using ATLAS.ti following a two-cycle approach. Analysis preserved original narratives and conversational structures to uphold Indigenous knowledge sharing traditions. Invited

co-authors contributed report sections based on personal experiences and expertise, demonstrating lived commitment to advancing Native education and Tribal sovereignty.

Phase 4: Report Development and Submission—The project team held regular meetings to review emerging themes, reflect on findings, and collaboratively draft report sections. The final report was submitted to Governor's Office, OSPI, State Board of Education, Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee, legislative education committees, and Tribal communities to inform future work.

Key Findings and Recommendations

EOGOAC Progress (2014–2025): The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee, established under RCW 28A.300.136, has synthesized findings from 2008 achievement gap studies into comprehensive implementation plans. Throughout its history, EOGOAC reports have analyzed critical themes including disaggregating data, cultural competency, language endorsements, mental and behavioral health, attendance, accountability, equity/access, and institutional racism. Annual recommendations have progressively addressed reducing suspensions and expulsions (2014–2016), cultural competencies (2014–2018), elevating social emotional learning (2020), and addressing institutional racism (2021).

Language and Cultural Education: Native American tribal sovereignty includes the inherent right of each Tribal nation to educate its children with focus on fluency in tribal languages and cultural knowledge systems. Critical recommendations include cultivating more tribal language teachers through local models (Makah's Inclusionary Practices Project, Inchelium's Immersion Pilot, Spokane Tribe's N3 Pilot Program), ensuring livable wages and comparable benefits for language teachers, investing in professional development that builds language fluency and incorporates tribal historical knowledge, and providing training in classroom management and culturally relevant pedagogies. Policies must protect Tribal language and culture education, establish Tribal languages as official languages, integrate language fluency into educational policy, and support collaborative efforts between State and Tribal nations to develop comprehensive funding for fluency training.

Data Sovereignty and Student Identification: Accurate identification of Native American students is a matter of educational equity, tribal sovereignty, and accountability. Current data systems fail to reflect the full scope of Native identity—racially, culturally, politically—leading to loss of funding, missed service opportunities, and erosion of visibility of Native youth. Recommendations include amending state education policy to mandate inclusive and detailed race/ethnicity data practices using maximum representation principles, standardizing statewide tribal data-sharing agreements through legislative framework requiring all school districts to develop agreements with every tribal nation represented in their student body, and requiring annual demographic audits with Title VI follow-ups and SIS alignment.

JMLSTI Curriculum Implementation: The John McCoy (Iulilaš) Since Time Immemorial curriculum has established history within Washington state's education system. Recommendations support continued relationship building between Tribes, districts, and higher education institutions, opportunities to renew and grow tribal-specific curriculum resources, and ensuring educators and administrators have necessary pre-service and in-service training. Current legislative action includes bills to establish clear implementation deadlines and direct OSPI and OSPI ONE to monitor implementation statewide. Although SB 5570 did not pass the 2025 legislative session, it will be reintroduced in January 2026.

Call to Action: Securing Our Futures: The report concludes with an urgent call-to-action emphasizing that investing in Native education is crucial for healing the state and country. The U.S. education system has historically stripped away Native identities, language, culture, educational self-determination, and the joy of learning, creating a unique obligation to restore and heal. The study encourages Tribal leadership, community members, district and school leaders, educators, and students to stay informed about legislative processes and to participate, collaborate, and support elected officials at all levels to advance policies that benefit Native children, our most valuable resource.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Title VI State Match

Washington has an obligation to educate American Indian and Alaska Native students under both the state constitution and treaties with federally recognized tribes. OSPI is requesting funding to match the federal investment in AI/AN students through Title VI. Despite recent state policy advances, the dark history of boarding schools and inter-generational trauma continues to drive persistent inequitable educational outcomes for AI/AN students. State matching funds would demonstrate commitment to honoring treaty obligations and supporting Native student success.

Native Educator Cultivation

The Native Educator Cultivation Program continues building capacity to identify, support, recruit, and retain Native American educators. The program supervisor has established connections with all 29 federally recognized tribes, school districts, ESDs, and community-based organizations. In partnership with Region 16 Comprehensive Center, a Tribal Governed teacher preparation workgroup conducted a landscape analysis of tribal teacher certification programs, with a final report submitted in September 2024.

Funding Resilience

Tribal leaders voiced deep concern over the fragility of both federal and state funding streams. Federal programs like Impact Aid and Head Start remain lifelines for Native education, but their vulnerability to cuts underscores the urgency of creating more stable, flexible, and sovereign funding pathways.

Priority Actions:

- Maintain consolidated list of state educational grants available to tribes
- Explore legal pathways for incorporating federal education funds into 477 plans
- Continue funding and supporting ONE's expanded role under RCW 28A.300.105

CONCLUSION

The 2024–2025 reporting period represents significant progress in Native education across Washington State. The inaugural Tribal Education Leaders Summit established a new model for government-to-government dialogue, centering tribal priorities and creating a blueprint for ongoing collaboration. The expansion of tribal consultation training has built unprecedented capacity among education leaders to engage meaningfully with tribal nations.

The development of the Native Literacy Framework and the Native Literacy and Tribal Language Convening demonstrate our commitment to culturally grounded approaches that honor Indigenous ways of knowing. The Fentanyl/Opioid Prevention Pilot confirmed that culturally specific prevention strategies are most effective for Native communities.

Key initiatives continue to strengthen our foundation for Native student success:

- Supports for tribal-governed STEC schools
- Tribal consultation and government-to-government training for education leaders
- Tribal language learning and revitalization
- Full implementation of John McCoy (lulilash) Since Time Immemorial curriculum
- Cultivation of Native educators
- Data sovereignty initiatives to ensure accurate identification and representation of Native students

As articulated at the Tribal Education Leaders Summit: "Belonging is primary to academic achievement." Our work going forward will continue to center this principle, ensuring Native students are supported in knowing who they are and where they come from as the foundation for their educational success.

Essential legislative support will continue to be determined through consultations, collaborations, discussions, goal setting, and accountability between tribal leaders, Native families, and our local, regional, and statewide education and legislative leaders.

STAFF CONTACTS

Henry Strom, Assistant Superintendent

360-918-3953 | henry.strom@k12.wa.us

Shandy Abrahamson, Director

360-725-6160 | shandy.abrahamson@k12.wa.us

Maxine Alex, Tribal Consultation Program Supervisor

564-200-2619 | maxine.alex@k12.wa.us

Bawaajigekwe Boulley, Native Student Success Program Supervisor

564-669-8834 | bawaajigekwe.boulley@k12.wa.us

Destiney Petty, Tribal Language Program Supervisor

564-200-4313 | destiney.petty@k12.wa.us

Kathrine Lawrence, Administrative Program Specialist—JMLSTI, STECs

360-725-6160 | kathrine.lawrence@k12.wa.us

Kari Tally, Administrative Assistant—Office of Native Education

564-200-3482 | kari.tally@k12.wa.us

Native Education General Email

NativeEducation@k12.wa.us

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Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Chris Reykdal | State Superintendent
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Old Capitol Building | P.O. Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200