

# AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION

FALL 2019 | BRIEF 2

## WHO IS THIS LEARNER?

American Indian learners are likely to have multiple tribal affiliations (e.g., Osage, Seminole, and Caddo). It is important to embrace diversity within tribal affiliations because supporting an American Indian student requires an intentional commitment to learning about which tribal affiliations they possess. There are 39 tribal nations headquartered in Oklahoma, of which 38 are federally-recognized and one state-recognized. Little known fact for most is that the one state-recognized tribal nation is the Yuchi (Euchee) Nation.

There are many opportunities to take it upon yourself to learn more about various American Indian learners (Shotton et al., 2013). Such learners are likely to attend college near their homes and families near their communities. Understand that American Indian communities are not all located on tribal reservations, they appear in both rural and urban areas alike. Studies in higher education indicate that American Indian students who have a strong connection to culture may contribute to academic success (Brayboy, 2004).

Brayboy, B.M.J. (2004). Hiding in the ivy: American Indian students and visibility in elite educational settings. *Harvard Educational Review*, 74(2), 125-152

## WHY IT MATTERS

Since the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 tribal nations have made remarkable progress in both economic and political terms. For example, in 2004 the total tribal economic impact on the State of Oklahoma amounted to approximately \$8 billion. Such economic wealth matters because tribal nations make great educational investments with their sustained revenues, such as: healthcare, housing, bridges, roadways, language retention programs, and cultural enrichment programs. As school districts plan to improve their commitment to American Indian equity, it is important to recognize that tribal nations have contributed great amounts of success to the state economy. Why it matters is because tribal nations invest a large portion of these economic funds into public education, since 2006 the total amount to public education has been \$1.3 billion.

Clark, B. (2013). *Indian Tribes of Oklahoma: A Guide*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Foster authentic representation through adopting more meaningful text and classroom resources that embrace diversity within tribal nations.
- Create responsible conversations by equipping non-American Indian students with basic familiarity of the contributions of tribal nations to all Oklahoma communities.
- Facilitate meaningful collaboration and consultation with local tribal nations by sending lesson plans or curriculum that concern American Indian identities in order to empower tribal nations to have agency in the design of culturally responsive resources and teaching materials.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What tribal nations are headquartered within 50 miles radius of my school district and how representative is that tribe in within our student population?
- What has our district done in terms of outreach and proactive engagement to build collaborations and consultation with local tribal nations?
- What resources do local tribal nations offer our district and do eligible American Indian students have a general awareness of these available resources?
- Does our district currently offer culturally responsive professional development that teaches about the diversity within tribal nations throughout Oklahoma?

## ATTENDING TO EQUITY

- Participate with your district's official tribal consultation meeting and/or analyze the history of district policies as they relate to supporting American Indian students.
- Attend a Title VI Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), which are required for the proper administration of PK-12 Indian Education.
- Assume tribal diversity within each American Indian student, yet do not assume they each are comfortable or familiar with their cultural identities.
- Be aware of negative imagery that may be portrayed in terms of derogatory mascots, logos, nicknames – instead collaborate to encourage positive imagery.
- Initiate a cultural competency self-assessment to identify improvements to three competencies: (1) district assumptions, values, and biases, (2) share worldviews of others, and (3) developing appropriate interventions (Shotton et al., 2013).

Heather J. Shotton, Shelly C. Lowe, and Stephanie J. Waterman; foreword by John L. Garland. (2013). *Beyond the asterisk: understanding Native students in higher education*. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing,

