

Report of the Indigenous Engagement Working Group

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CONTENTS

Indigenous Engagement Working Group: Purpose, Membership, and Activities	3
Introduction to the Recommendations	4
Recommendations for Immediate Action	6
Recommendations for Long-term Interventions	9
Appendix A	13
Appendix B	14
Acknowledgements	15
Works Cited	16

INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP: PURPOSE, MEMBERSHIP, AND ACTIVITIES

The Indigenous Engagement Working Group (IEWG) was established in April 2021. Its purpose was to recommend strategies to 1) strengthen Indigenous representation and leadership, 2) increase Indigenous membership, and 3) improve understanding and application of Indigenous placemaking practices. Three subgroups were created to address each focus area. Charlotte Davidson (Indigenous Relations Advisor, NASPA), Pam Agoyo (Member at Large, NASPA Board of Directors), and Monica Nixon (Assistant Vice President for Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice, NASPA) were responsible for setting and overseeing the strategic direction of the IEWG. Respectively, they served as liaisons to each subgroup.

Subgroup co-chairs were convened monthly from April 2021 to September 2021. The membership of the working group comprises NASPA staff and previous and current Indigenous NASPA leaders. A list of working group members is in Appendix A.

The activities of the IEWG consisted of the following:

- Reviewed [Repairing and Recentering NASPA's Work with the Indigenous Peoples Community](#) and met with NASPA President.
- Reviewed *Indigenous Peoples Knowledge Community (IPKC): Self-determination in Higher Education*, authored by Stephanie Waterman and Irvin Harrison.
- Interviewed previous and current Indigenous NASPA members.
- Conducted listening sessions with previous and current Indigenous NASPA leadership.
- Administered surveys to prospective and current NASPA members belonging to Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) and Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institutions (NASNTIs).

INTRODUCTION TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Conceptualizing Indigenous Engagement

In the context of NASPA, Indigenous engagement has historically involved working in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples to produce and integrate land acknowledgments into the opening session of the Annual Conference. Nearly ten years of this practice has engendered a larger lens to re-see the NASPA landscape as a terrain that continues to either wittingly or unwittingly invisibilize, marginalize and disenfranchise Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous engagement is seldom applied beyond land acknowledgments and is often made into a static and time-limited practice by well-meaning NASPA colleagues. Indigenous engagement, thus, provides a focus and way to enter into understanding and improving the experiences of Indigenous Peoples in NASPA.

As a living concept, Indigenous engagement is dynamic and evolving. Within the ecology of NASPA, Indigenous engagement

- challenges the “traditional ways” (in a Western sense) Indigenous Peoples are invited to participate in the planning of NASPA meetings, conferences, and other association-related events by privileging their linguistic, cultural, historical, and political ties with place (i.e., land, water, skies, cosmos, and the more-than-human relations that inhabit these spaces);
- encourages the complicated negotiation and decolonization of ideas, practices, and interventions that do not recreate harm toward Indigenous Peoples; and
- recognizes Indigenous knowledge as cultural strengths, *not deficits*, to improve the profession and strengthen higher education leadership.

Identifying Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous is the term we apply in this report. “Indigenous” denotes a global community of Peoples whose collective identity is characterized by linguistic, cultural, historical, and political ties to the land. The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues offers seven criteria for the identification of Indigenous Peoples:

1. Self-identification as Indigenous Peoples at the individual level and acceptance by the community as a member;
2. Historical continuity with pre-colonial or pre-settler societies;
3. Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources;
4. Distinct social, economic, or political system;
5. Distinct language, culture, and beliefs;
6. People from non-dominant groups of society; and
7. Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.

It is worth noting, however, that Indigenous Peoples should not be understood in the aggregate. “Indigenous” is a relational term. Thus, families, clans, bands, and Native Nations have their own language to identify themselves and express their unique relationships with local contexts.

Reviewing the Recommendations

We offer two types of recommendations: recommendations for immediate action and recommendations for long-term interventions.

Recommendations for Immediate Action are arranged according to their alignment with three of [NASPA's 2019-2024 Strategic Goals](#). Each set of recommendations entails three components: 1) Specifying the recommendation, 2) A rationale, and 3) Supporting strategies. Since there was overlap among ideas from the subgroups, recommendations were aggregated into categories under each strategic goal:

Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice

- Shared Role and Responsibility
- Support Indigenous Voices at the Annual Conference and Regional Conferences
- Promote Indigenous Representation

Research and Scholarship

- Advance and Develop Indigenous Scholars

Professional Development and Engagement

- Tribal College and University Memberships
- Relationship Building

Recommendations for Long-Term Interventions are classified according to their alignment with specific areas related to NASPA's 2019-2024 Strategic Goals.

We view these recommendations as assisting NASPA in achieving its vision of *fulfilling the promise of higher education* by creating an organizational environment that advances new perspectives, new commitments, and an evolving sense of identity; in building robust and sustainable systems of support for Indigenous higher education communities that are consistent with who they want to become, both culturally and professionally; and promoting positive recognition of Indigenous members involved with the association, as they enrich the profession and campus settings upon which they learn, lead, and teach.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

The working group recommends that the NASPA Board of Directors pursue the following immediate actions to embed Indigenous engagement more holistically into the organizational structure and operations of NASPA.

STRATEGIC AREA: INCLUSION, EQUITY, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Shared Responsibility

In the past and present, the responsibility of improving the ecology of NASPA for Indigenous Peoples has mainly rested with Indigenous NASPA members. NASPA also lacks full-time Indigenous staff to lead and inform this work. To emphasize NASPA's shared role and responsibility in advancing Indigenous Engagement, we recommend the following:

1. Identify NASPA staff and/or offices who can help steward the process for institutionalizing recommendations and advancing NASPA's Indigenous engagement efforts further forward.
2. Approve financial commitment to staffing Indigenous engagement work appropriately, consistently, and with intention regarding involvement from Indigenous communities.
3. Evaluate annually and report publicly the progress of NASPA in meeting the working group recommendations.
4. Continued Board focus on [repairing and recentering NASPA's work with the Indigenous Peoples Community](#).

Support Indigenous Voices at the Annual Conference and Regional Conferences

Indigenous voices have been historically underrepresented at Annual and Regional Conferences. The Working Group concludes that a significantly more robust complement of Indigenous voices, perspectives, and experiences is vital to enhancing the learning and development of conference attendees. With this in mind, we recommend the following:

1. Annually, one major program element must reflect an Indigenous focus, such as but not limited to: keynote speakers, featured educational sessions and panels, SA Speaks, and scholarly papers.
2. Apart from the above, we also urge NASPA to maintain the status of *The Power and Place Symposium* as a specialty preconference. For reference, *Power and Place: Indian Education in America* (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001) gives this event its theoretical orientation for keynote presentations, concurrent sessions, and each supporting element of the Symposium.
3. Conference budgets must include costs related to land acknowledgment speakers, stickers, and integrating the unique spatial needs of Indigenous Peoples, such as smudging spaces.
4. At national and regional events, consistently implement processes that allow Indigenous participants to include tribal or Indigenous affiliations on nametags.

Promote Indigenous Representation

The lack of consistent Indigenous representation in the association was a unifying theme of the subgroups' final reports. There is a reasonable concern that without Indigenous Peoples occupying

leadership positions, NASPA is missing crucial sets of experiences and knowledge that could lead to a more culturally democratic organization. Accordingly, we recommend:

1. Make the Indigenous Engagement Advisor position permanent and identify a NASPA office to house the affairs of this position.
2. Explore alternative approaches to cultivating broader Indigenous participation in association-related bodies such as but not limited to NASPA Board of Directors, Regional Advisory Boards, Annual and Regional Conference Committees, NASPA SERVE Academy cohorts, NUFP, and GAP cohorts, faculty teams for institutes, and steering committees.
3. Actively explore creating a system to track and report the progress of Indigenous representation across key NASPA areas, as listed above.

STRATEGIC AREA: RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

Advance and Develop Indigenous Scholars

The Working Group addressed the issue and support for the advancement of Indigenous research and scholarship. Similarly, IPKC leaders convened at NASPA's headquarters in 2019 also expressed desire for NASPA to develop pathways for Indigenous scholars to advance research and pedagogy on student affairs and higher education topics. Therefore, to accomplish the advancement and development of Indigenous scholars, we recommend:

1. To empower the full engagement and inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing, establish and support opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to regularly advance research and scholarship in NASPA-led publications, including special issues focused on topics and issues important to Indigenous higher education communities.
2. Invite Indigenous scholars published in NASPA journals to partner with NASPA editorial staff to produce workshops about publication strategies, benefits of engaging in research, and identifying key resources for supporting Indigenous intellectual agendas.
3. To develop Indigenous thought leadership, investigate and consider creating and budgeting for a Writing Retreat focused on Indigenous higher education topics.
4. Create and fund scholarships, grants, and other modes of recognition to advance and promote the work of Indigenous scholars.

STRATEGIC AREA: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

Tribal College and University (TCU) Memberships

NASPA prides itself on being a member-based organization comprising a network of global professionals. However, to move toward a more diverse organization, inclusive of Tribal professionals who serve and support Indigenous higher education communities, NASPA needs to be accessible, thus affordable, for TCUs. Accordingly, we recommend:

1. Explore the feasibility of establishing a low-cost fee structure, including discounted registration for NASPA conferences and events, for tribal college and university students, professionals, and faculty to become individual members of NASPA.

2. Explore the feasibility of establishing a low-cost fee structure for TCUs to become institutional members.
3. Re-evaluate membership rates for TCUs to better align with how these institutions are set up and how their structures and finances can differ from 2- and 4-year Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions (NASNTIs).
4. Further to the above, consider the implications of individual membership costs and if the current Institutional membership structure for 2- and 4-year NASNTI institutions is the model that considers the varying structures and finances of TCUs.
5. Create membership campaigns that target TCU higher education communities to build affinity to NASPA as a professional home.

Relationship Building

Indigenous Engagement requires an ongoing practice of “showing up” in spaces occupied by Indigenous communities external to NASPA. The Working Group is of the view that “showing up with good intentions” is one of many paths NASPA can follow to forge genuine connections and potentially transformative initiatives with Indigenous Peoples. To begin the needed process of relationship building, we recommend the following:

1. Appoint and fund NASPA representatives to attend Indigenous-focused higher education conferences to promote the association, establish a network of Indigenous higher education relations, and become educated about current issues and priorities of Tribal Colleges and Universities and Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institutions.
2. To strengthen engagement between NASPA and Indigenous Peoples, explore the reciprocal benefits of organizational partnerships with Indigenous/Native-focused non-profit organizations (e.g., American Indian Higher Education Consortium, The American Indian College Fund, American Indian Graduate Center, American Indian Science and Engineering Society, National Congress of American Indians, National Indian Education Association).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LONG-TERM INTERVENTIONS

Implementation and tracking the impact of the recommendations for immediate action, outlined above, will change the climate and culture of NASPA in ways that illuminate and energize deeper, ongoing engagement with Indigenous Peoples and concerns. Accordingly, the working groups' proposed recommendations for longer-term action are included below, with the caveat that additional priorities could emerge.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT	
Provide exceptional education and volunteer engagement that prepare members to lead on current and future issues in higher education.	
Strategic Goals	Recommendations
<p>Develop, implement, and evaluate accessible professional development and networking opportunities that address current and emerging issues for all career levels.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recommendation: At Annual and Regional Conference planning levels, investigate discontinuities with Indigenous Engagement by assessing needs and challenges to execute this work in a respectful, appropriate, and coordinated manner. 2. Recommendation: Require NASPA conference planning committees to undertake a process of engagement with Indigenous communities and organizations to explore culturally appropriate approaches to relationship building, collaboration, and decolonization in the formation of NASPA professional development spaces. 3. Recommendation: Appoint Indigenous Peoples and NASPA members with a demonstrated knowledge base and collaborative working experience with Indigenous communities to serve on NASPA conference planning committees. 4. Recommendation: Ensure that Indigenous Engagement reflects the expectations and needs of Indigenous Peoples by conducting timely outreach to leaders and members of the Indigenous Peoples Knowledge Community to communicate engagement goals and efforts. 5. Recommendation: Establish a community of practice for NASPA members to support their learning and reflection about Indigenous placemaking practices. 6. Recommendation: Create an instrument to survey Indigenous representation in NASPA concerning administration, governance, leadership, and other forms of member involvement. 7. Recommendation: Conduct a comprehensive inventory of

	<p>Indigenous programs, internal and external partnerships, and supports to identify specific gaps and opportunities and establish a baseline for tracking progress.</p> <p>8. Recommendation: Establish outreach efforts to TCUs and NASNTIs to invite participation in Annual and Regional Conferences.</p> <p>9. Recommendation: Create a map based on NASPA Regions that include locations of TCUs and NASNTIs and publish it on the NASPA website.</p>
Foster and promote volunteer engagement that enhances effective professional practice and pathways to leadership.	10. Recommendation: Increase Indigenous representation among NASPA Undergraduate Fellows Program (NUFP) and Graduate Associate Program (GAP) participants through intentional outreach to TCUs and NASNTIs and engagement with NUFP alumni and mentors who self-identify as Indigenous.
Extend the value of NASPA membership to a wider network of higher education professionals and partners.	<p>11. Recommendation: Provide access to Indigenous-focused NASPA efforts (e.g., programs, internal and external partnerships, and supports) by creating a webpage on the NASPA website.</p> <p>12. Recommendation: Consult Indigenous Peoples to determine their development needs and challenges in accessing Indigenous content within their programs and institutions; create programs and supports to meet needs and address challenges.</p> <p>13. Recommendation: Explore additional low-cost and/or accessible avenues that welcome the involvement and participation of TCUs in the event and conference planning experience.</p>
EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE	
Invest in and advocate for equitable and inclusive practices that promote socially just communities.	
Strategic Goals	Recommendations
Strengthen capacity in all professional roles to recognize, challenge, and dismantle systemic barriers to improve post-secondary access and achievement.	<p>14. Recommendation: Coordinate ongoing NASPA leadership conversations with TCU and Indigenous leaders to explore ideas for partnerships around advocacy, practice, and critical needs.</p> <p>15. Recommendation: Develop and maintain a professional development series (similar to the University of Arizona’s “Native Know How Series”) that will orient and prepare NASPA staff and volunteer leaders in regional and national board roles</p>

	about the experiences of Indigenous and Native professionals in higher education.
Open pathways throughout the Association and the student affairs profession for equity-seeking, historically minoritized, and marginalized communities.	16. Recommendation: Develop consistent and transparent methods to track Indigenous representation and volunteer leadership in NASPA and use these data to establish membership and engagement goals.
Collaborate on the development of evidence-based, innovative, inclusive, and socially just higher education policy and practices.	17. Recommendation: Implement an asset-focused approach to understand and incorporate what “knowledge” means to Indigenous peoples and how that is applied to our policies, research, and practices on college campuses, and how NASPA might also incorporate its meaning into our broader work.
ADVOCACY FOR STUDENT SUCCESS Advocate to support student learning and success.	
Strategic Goals	Recommendations
Center student learning, development, and success as core outcomes of higher education.	18. Recommendation: Explore the feasibility of creating a Center for Indigenous Higher Education and Student Success within NASPA, perhaps as a part of the Center for First-generation Student Success.
Develop independent, critical thinkers who understand their responsibility to foster community, civic, and democratic engagement.	
Collaborate with local, tribal , state, national, and global partners to champion and support legislation, policies, and practices that advance student learning and success.	19. Recommendation: Insert the term “tribal” into the third NASPA strategic goal of <i>Advocacy for Student Success</i> . Tribal Nations assert their sovereignty and self-determination through the inherent right to educate their citizenry. Springer, Davidson, and Waterman (2013) affirm this connection to higher education by asserting, “Native American students live on land that was colonized by the very institutions from which they seek an education. Treaties and other policy agreements, laws, and Native American sovereignty are part of our student’s experiences. No other population comes to college with these characteristics” (p. 112).

	<p>20. Recommendation: In collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, implement a policy and practice of tribal consultation when making advocacy decisions that impact the learning and success of Indigenous higher education student communities.</p>
<p>RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP</p> <p>Generate research and scholarship that advance evidence-based, emergent, and equitable practices.</p>	
<p>Strategic Goals</p>	<p>Recommendations</p>
<p>Create and foster interdisciplinary strategic partnerships to advance a data-informed research and practice agenda.</p>	<p>21. Recommendation: Develop partnerships with Native higher education non-profit organizations to create opportunities to highlight and engage in research and practice.</p> <p>22. Recommendation: Seek partnerships with organizations to understand “Indigenous Data Sovereignty” (Rainie, Rodriguez-Lonebear, & Martinez, 2017) as a method to indigenize data collection, reporting, and assessment of Indigenous higher education student communities.</p> <p>23. Recommendation: Collaborate with Indigenous scholarly publications (Journal of American Indian Education, American Indian Culture & Research Journal, etc.) where Indigenous scholarship can be cross-shared.</p>
<p>Invest in and promote a scholar-practitioner identity and mindset within the student affairs profession.</p>	<p>24. Recommendation: Establish professional development scholarships for Indigenous graduate students to participate in Annual and Regional Conferences.</p> <p>25. Recommendation: Establish financial opportunities that explicitly support Indigenous graduate students and their research.</p>
<p>Develop innovative models to support the creation and recognition of exemplary research and scholarship.</p>	<p>26. Recommendation: Create models that look at and explore Indigenous research methodologies and how they can be applied to enhance and deepen the understanding of student affairs and higher education.</p>

APPENDIX A

Indigenous Engagement Working Group

Asterisk denotes working group co-chairs

Indigenous Higher Education Organizations and TCU Membership Workgroup

*Dr. Freda Gipp (Apache/Comanche), Haskell Indian Nations University

*Jordana Taylor, Director of Membership, NASPA

David Arnold, AVP for Safety, Health and Wellbeing Initiatives, NASPA

Karen Francis-Begay (Diné), University of Arizona

Dr. Matthew Makomenaw (Grand Traverse Bay Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians), Yale University

Dr. Corey Still (United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians), American Indian Graduate Center

Liaison: Dr. Charlotte Davidson (Diné/Three Affiliated Tribes - Mandan, Hidatsa, & Arikara Nation),

Indigenous Relations Advisor, NASPA

Indigenous Representation and Leadership Workgroup

*Dr. Tiffany Smith (Cherokee and Muscogee Creek), Oklahoma City University

*James Stascavage, Senior Director of Leadership and Senior Student Affairs Officer Initiatives, NASPA

Dr. Judith Estrada, University of California Santa Cruz

Dr. George McClellan, University of Mississippi

Dr. Erin Kahunawai Wright (Kanaka 'Ōiwi), University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Liaison: Pam Agoyo (Ohkay Owingeh, Cochiti, & Kewa Pueblos), Member at Large, NASPA Board of Directors

Indigenous Logistics in Event Planning Workgroup

*Tiffani Kelli (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma), Colorado State University

*Tiki Ayiku, Assistant Vice President for Professional Development, NASPA

Kimberley Kushner, University of Missouri-Kansas City

J. Māhealani Quirk (Kanaka 'Ōiwi) University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Ross Wantland, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Liaison: Dr. Monica Nixon, Assistant Vice President for Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice, NASPA

APPENDIX B

Comments on *The NASPA Power and Place Symposium*.

BY KAREN FRANCIS-BEGAY

Assistant Vice Provost, Native American Initiatives

University of Arizona

I am pleased to write this letter in support of NASPA's Indigenous Peoples Knowledge Community (IPKC) seeking NASPA's support in institutionalizing the Power and Place Symposium that was so admirably received across the nation.

I was an original leader for the IPKC, having helped the founders launch this affinity group. Since that time IPKC has made inroads to bring Indigenous voices and representation into the organization and network. Who would have ever imagined we would have an Indigenous representative on the NASPA board of directors? Who would have imagined we would have had a Leadership Exchange issue focused on Indigenous higher education? Who would have imagined that we would have had an amazing symposium that brought together a wide range of educators, scholars, practitioners, and students to engage in meaningful dialogue on how we can and must support Indigenous students in higher education, and inspire us to be a force for change? Imagination is powerful and it is our ancestors who continue to guide our pathways and give us the courage and foresight to lead.

The symposium is critical to the ongoing work that needs to happen so we can strengthen our voice and our alliances that are the impetus for improving Indigenous access and success in postsecondary education. I have witnessed and been impressed with NASPA's intentional support for social justice and advocating for marginalized communities. It has positively impacted my own professional interests to return to the NASPA network and want to contribute to their mission, because they have proven themselves to be intentional and committed.

It is my hope that NASPA will be a dedicated change agent and continue to invest the time, people, and resources into the work of the IPKC, especially the symposium that has, and will continue to be, a positive voice and community for Indigenous peoples.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Indigenous Engagement Working Group is guided by the past and present leadership experiences of NASPA's Indigenous Peoples Knowledge Community, the support of NASPA President, Kevin Kruger, and advocacy of NASPA's Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice Division.

We want to recognize members of NASPA's Board of Directors, Dr. Angela Batista and Pam Agoyo, for investing heavy intellectual, administrative, and emotional work in making Indigenous Peoples a priority of NASPA.

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