

WINHEC Accreditation Eligibility Application, July 2019

Montana State University Department of Native American Studies

Mission

The Department of Native American Studies was established to provide and advance quality education for and about American Indians of Montana, the region, and the nation. In fulfilling this mission, the Department is committed to meeting the changing needs of Montana's Indian tribes and all Montana citizens through excellence in teaching, research, and service.

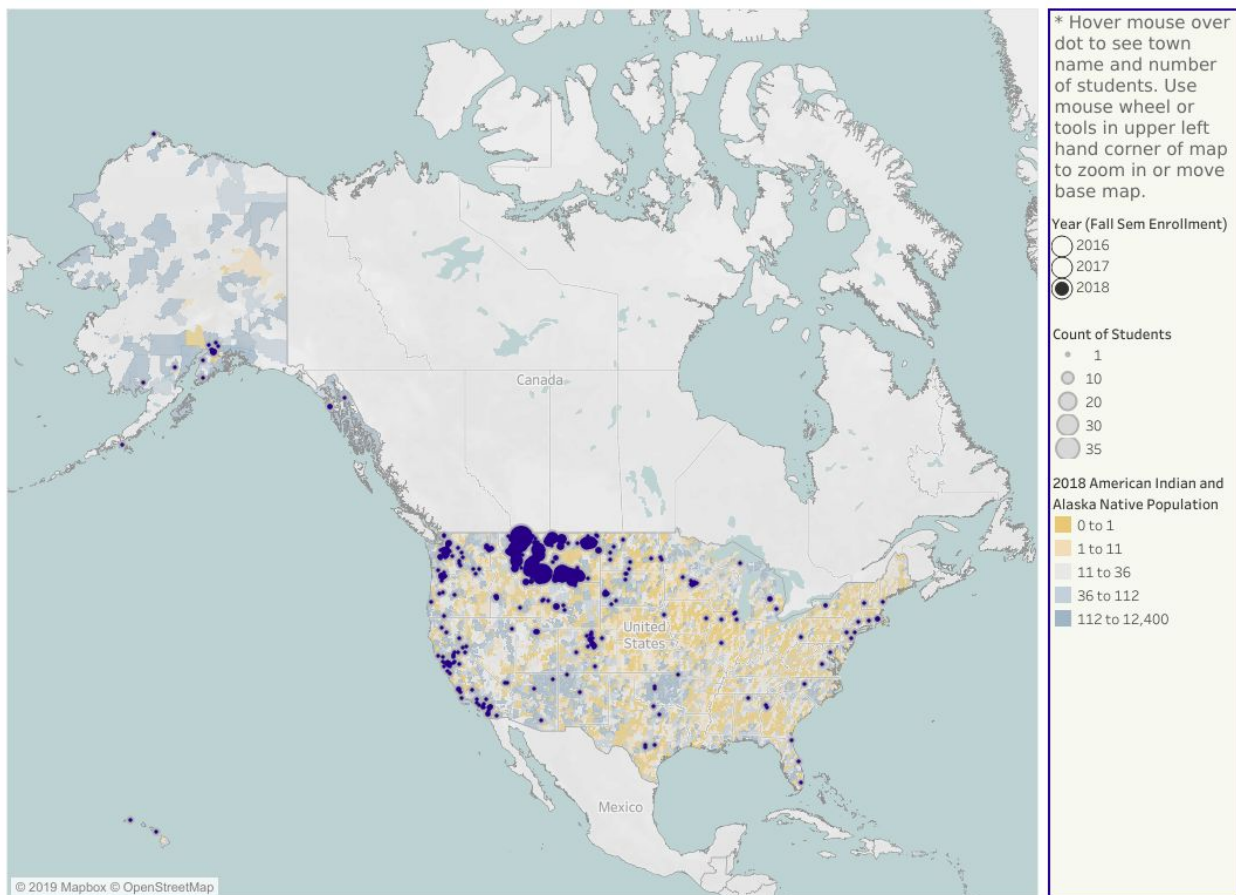
In its academic programs, the Department provides concentrated study through the undergraduate minor, the online graduate certificate in Native American Studies, and the Master of Arts degree in Native American Studies.

Students in any major can also gain a multicultural perspective through NAS offerings in the University's core curriculum. Through its research and other creative efforts, the Department actively pursues interdisciplinary scholarship in the field of Native American Studies. The Department of Native American Studies at Montana State University is uniquely situated within a Land Grant public research university. We serve a diverse student population including a significant and growing Indigenous student population.



Students' Communities

Since 2005, the Indigenous student population at MSU has nearly tripled (as of fall 2018; these data are collected by the University on the 15th day of each fall semester).¹ Indigenous students account for nearly 5% of the total student population, as compared to a statewide and growing Indigenous population of nearly 7%. All across campus, graduate and undergraduate degree programs enroll Native students. Many come from Indigenous communities across the United States. Still, a higher percentage of Native students at MSU come from one or more of these places: the seven reservations, urban centers, and other rural communities outside of tribal land in Montana.



Snapshot of interactive map, [Native American Students Home of Origin](http://www.montana.edu/opa/students/nativeamerican/NASHome.html), from MSU Office of Planning and Analysis, <http://www.montana.edu/opa/students/nativeamerican/NASHome.html>.

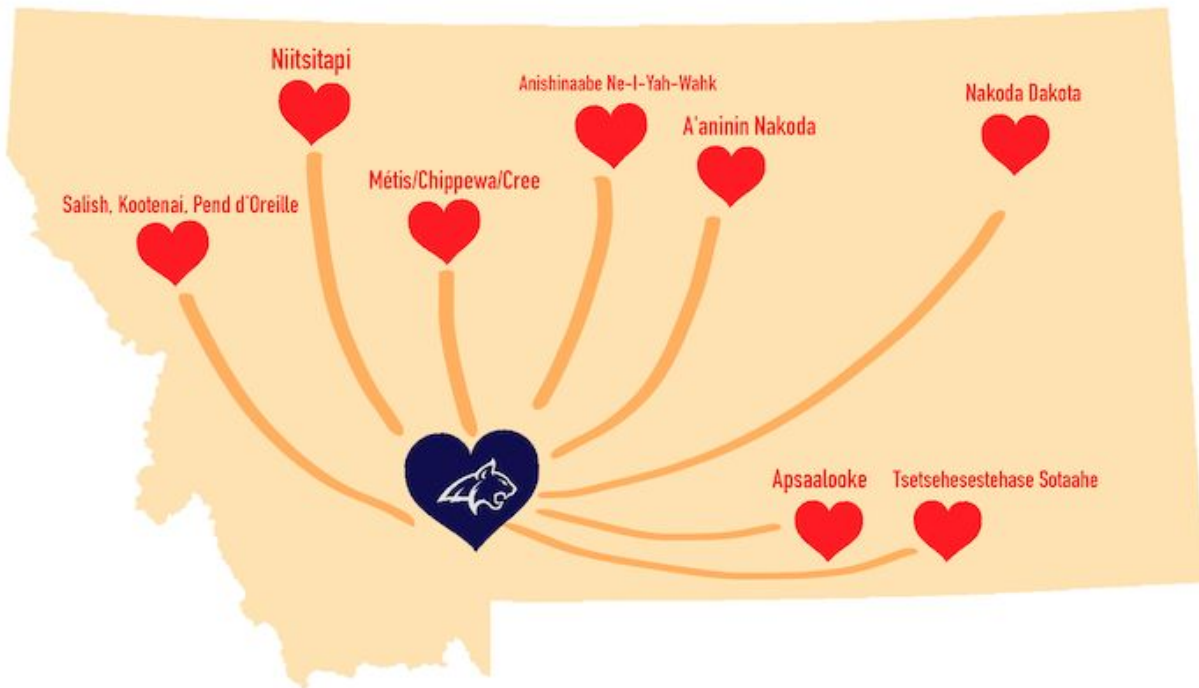
¹ MSU Office of Planning and Analysis, [Native American Students Enrollment](#).

Our Vision & Philosophy

As we introduce our Indigenous vision and philosophy, first and foremost, we acknowledge our place, our first teacher.

Acknowledgment of Traditional Custodians:

We acknowledge and honor, with respect, the Indigenous custodians on whose traditional territories Montana State University now stands and whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. We ask the spiritual ancestors to forgive our intrusion and humbly ask for their guidance.



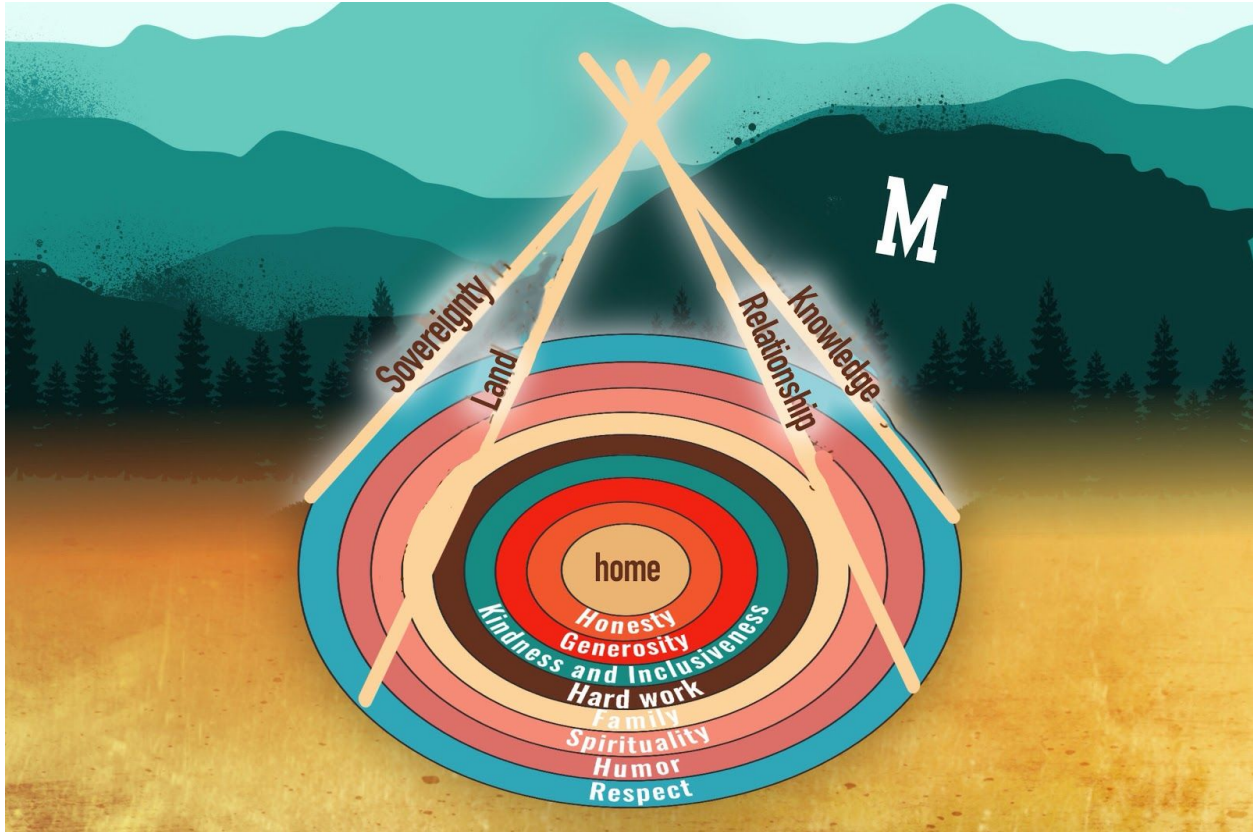
From Home to home

Montana State University is situated on Indigenous traditional territories--located near a major traditional crossroads for Plains and Plateau Native nations, a historically significant homeland in a valley where people of many bands and nations came to hunt bison, trade, celebrate and visit. Today, that tradition is continued through MSU's nationally recognized commitment to Native students--their education, communities, and nations--through the exchange of ideas.

Indigenous students who attend MSU come from communities across the state of Montana and beyond. Rather than “going away” from Home, we want our students to know that this, too, is their home. We are committed to creating and advocating for an Indigenized and intertribal campus community in which students can discover and contribute their unique creative gifts in a setting where Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing can flourish beside non-native traditions enriching both the Indigenous community and the higher education community.

“Home is defined as the environment that provides the cultural resources through which youth acquire and develop roles, responsibilities, and ways of knowing, and that contributes to a strong sense of belonging to community.” While “home is defined as the secondary environment providing cultural resources that are not inherent to capital H-Home.” Non-Indigenous secondary spaces, such as MSU, oftentimes result in experiences in which American Indian youth are required to negotiate and adapt to thrive in the home environment.² By creating a safe and cooperative space of Indigeneity, MSU NAS intends to bring a balance between the cultural models of Home and home in a way that will lead to educational access and a contribution to both communities--MSU and our students’ communities of origin. Developing a sense of “belonging to community” is the primary shared creative work of the Department of Native American Studies faculty, staff, and students.

² Darold H. and Sweeney R. Windchief Joseph, “Nahongvita: A Conceptual Model to Support Rural American Indian Youth in Pursuit of Higher Education,” *Journal of American Indian Education* 54, no. 3 (Fall 2015): 81-82.



In this 'home' the values of many Native peoples of our region, the Northwestern Plains of North America, are the foundation of our relationships with one another. These have been defined by our predecessors as the Departments Core Cultural Values.

Core Cultural Values

Honesty

Honesty in all dealings is the guiding principle upon which the Department operates.

Generosity

We cooperate with and serve the community and students, gladly sharing knowledge and resources entrusted to us.

Kindness & Inclusiveness

We treat with kindness and inclusiveness all with whom we come into contact. We strive to cultivate an atmosphere of openness.

Hard Work

We all work hard to carry out the mission of our department and to achieve its goals in serving students and community and preserving and fostering Native American ways and traditions.

Family

Native cultures value family. Native people identify themselves by their family ties. We recognize the importance of family life and endeavor to cultivate that spirit with our students. As a department, we recognize that Native students often have complex familial and community responsibilities and strive to be flexible when unforeseen circumstances and obligations arise.

Spirituality

Many Native people place a high value on relationship to “that which is greater than self.” These beliefs often form meaning and purpose as defined by the individuals within their communities. The Department acknowledges these beliefs and itself honors the Creator in its private and public activities.

Humor

Through humor, we acknowledge our own weaknesses and mistakes, draw together the community or group, nurture humility, and create a learning and working atmosphere where no one takes themselves too seriously.

Respect

We honor the gift of self, others, elders, cultural knowledge, and Earth, as we put our energy together to do our creative work of studying, teaching, researching, and learning. We respect the gifts that have been given for our work, by using them in a good way and not wasting them.

Our core cultural values represent the values of Home--values cherished by the Native communities we serve, but not comprehensive or exclusive to any single community. It is from these guiding cultural values--the foundation of our native home at MSU--that we welcome Indigenous students and walk with them as they pursue their educational goals. Like a family, NAS staff and faculty strive to accompany students through the educational journey while supporting the needs of the whole person, including financial and social security, belonging, relational connections, academic mentoring, and opportunities to grow by doing and, eventually, leading.

From these foundational values spring the four essential pillars of the work we share with our students and communities--knowledge, relationship, land, and sovereignty. Our commitment to these four pillars emerges from the interplay between the colonized context in which we find ourselves--historically, politically, geographically, and culturally--and the fortitude and cultural wealth of Indigenous nations.

Imagining Indigenization & Reversal of Assimilation

Indigenous students who attend MSU are leaving their Home communities and joining an Inter-tribal home community within a larger non-Indigenous educational setting. We believe that in order to avoid assimilation in such a setting, it is essential to hold ground for Indigeneity, as a force of both resistance and survival, what Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor called 'survivance.'³ Our approach to Indigenous Student Well-being is not in "individualistic remedies" but with a strong belief that, for Indigenous students, well-being resides in community.⁴ At MSU that strength dwells in a diversified Indigenous community, intertribal in nature, where comparative and shared experiences are assets in the work of Indigenous survivance. Our Native community members have consistently and repeatedly expressed the importance of family, sense of belonging and community. Home is the place of belonging and well-being.

Indigenous Student Well-being requires first an understanding of what it is to be Indigenous. We believe that: "Just as there is great diversity among tribal nations, there is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined, and redefined by entities, organizations, and people. There is no generic American Indian."⁵ Culture, like the people and the land, is not static, but always evolving. We uphold Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing, as distinct and separate from Western ways of being, doing, and knowing, and we stand for the right of Indigenous peoples to educate their students in their own culture.⁶

³ Gerald Vizenor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

⁴ Waziyatawin & Michael Yellow Bird, ed., *For Indigenous Minds Only: A Decolonization Handbook* (Santa Fe, N.M.: School for Advanced Research Press, 2012) 181.

⁵ Montana Office of Public Instruction Indian Education for All Unit, Essential Understanding #3, "Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians" (Montana Office of Public Instruction Indian Education for All Unit, 2019), <https://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page%20Files/Indian%20Education/Indian%20Education%20101/essentialunderstandings.pdf?ver=2019-03-08-090932-123>, 7.

⁶ This statement is expressly affirmed in the introduction to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples... "the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves such, and to be respected as such," and in Article 8.1 "Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be

For Indigenous people in general, the common source of knowledge is the land. Our beliefs, languages, ceremonies, teaching stories, and our selves are shaped by that place we call Home, the land itself and the relatives of our communities--reservation, urban, or rural. The places where we grow up with our relatives or where we have frequently gone to be with our relatives--shape our identity. As Indigenous people, our understandings flow from the web of relationship, the land and people who know us. We also recognize that, for some Native students, their ancestral Home is still a foreign place from which familial, clan and tribal ties were broken by the legacies of colonization. We, as a Department serving Indigenous students from the thirteen tribes of Montana and across Turtle Island, honor the land and communities from which our students come, make way for their individual identities, and work to hold space for Indigeneity in all its representations.



Indigenous student well-being is nested in multiple institutional priorities -- the education of Indigenous students, the education of all students, and research done in our Indigenous communities. Considered through this broad lens, the work that MSU NAS does in relationship with educational and research partners directly and indirectly impacts Indigenous student well-being. The ultimate measure of that work is determined by the outcomes discernible within the communities we serve including: 1) Indigenous communities (rural and

subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture,” and Article 14.1 “Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.”

urban) within and outside Montana and; and 2) the student body, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, at MSU. Recognizing our unique circumstance --the varied Indigenous communities we serve, our situatedness in a state school, and Montana’s constitutional mandate of “Indian Education for All”⁷--this means a greater effort is required by the University’s administration to track not only recruitment and retention of Indigenous students at MSU, but how education, professional development, and university-based research affects Indigenous students and the communities from which they come. Ultimately, we hope that support for Native students and communities will be in all corners of campus, not relegated to a few programs.

To this end, and given the unique construct of Indigenous interests in relationship to the work that Montana State University and the Department of Native American Studies does, we have developed standards* in the following three areas: *Indigenous Student Well-being; Indigenous Research; and Indian Education for All in Higher Education.*

*The term “standards” is and is not a word that works from an Indigenous perspective. We recognize that Indigenous communities have expectations and benchmarks for their own youth as they guide them in their development. And at the same time, we want to set apart our use of the term from the Western perspective that uses standards as an external measurement of an individual’s progress by benchmarks set from the outside. We have done this by asking our community members:

For your community, what strengths would you like the Department of Native American Studies to nurture/empower/protect in Native students at MSU?

We recognize that it is the communities who set ‘standards’ which may also be called **values, strengths, talents,** and/or **gifts** that each community sees as valuable for a person of their own culture. The community and family are the first educators of their youth. It is the express job of MSU NAS to create an Indigenized space in which ‘the bundle’ that each individual carries is nurtured, protected, and supported while the student attends MSU, a non-Indigenous educational institution.

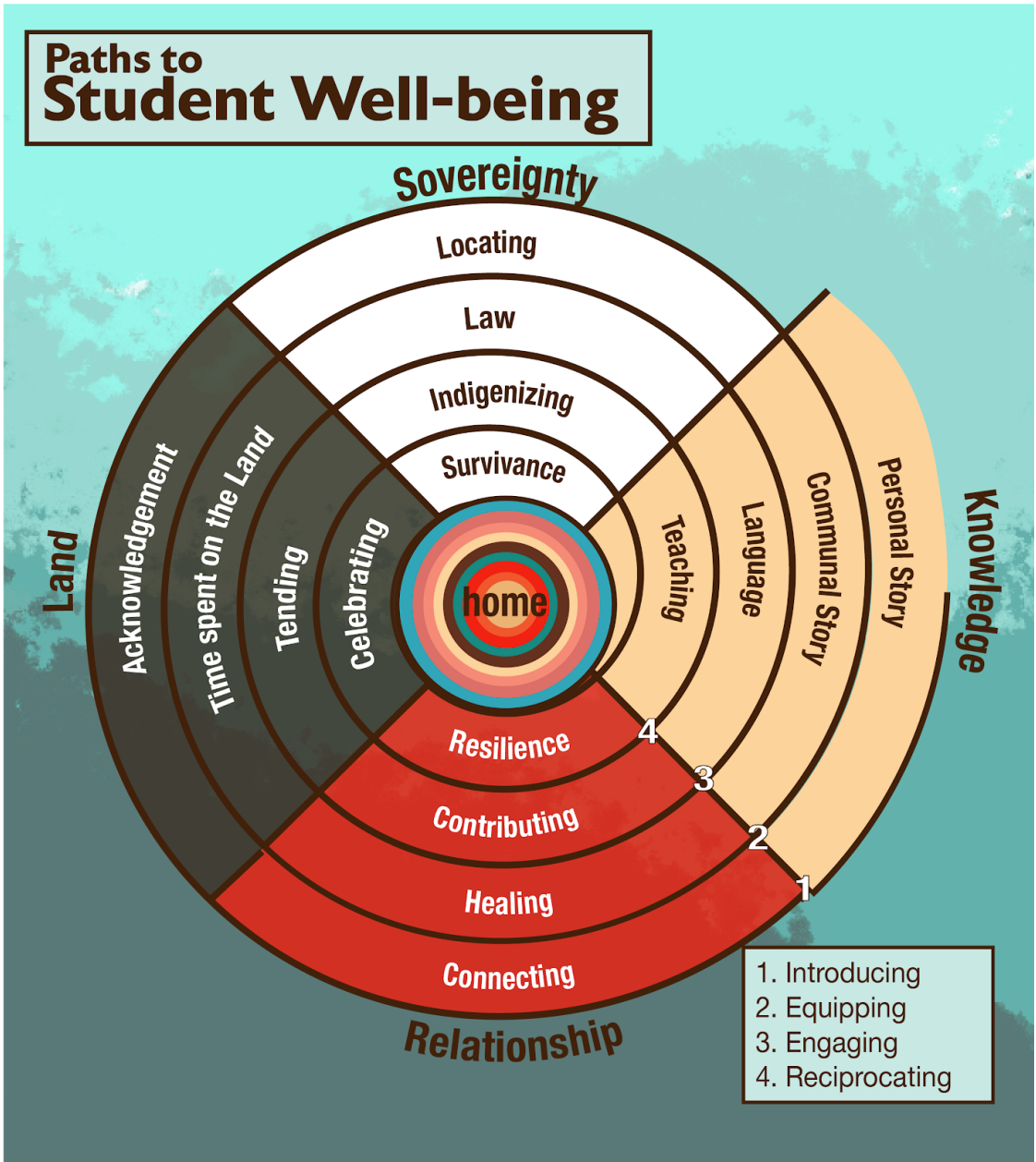
⁷ See Montana Code Annotated at [20-1-501](#).



1. Indigenous Student Well-being Standards

(applies to all Native students across all curriculum and includes both sides of the NAS house--education & student support)

Indigenous Student Well-being at MSU is understood as a journey. The path begins with those first steps in entering a new lodge, where just as at Home, well-being is tied to the community, knowledge is reciprocally transferred within the web of relationship and with a growing sense of responsibility. From those first steps taken in on that path, we journey like smoke spiraling upward to exit the lodge. Our path is cyclical and continual as we know and are known, come to know more deeply, and transfer knowledge to others on the path. Knowledge is co-created with purpose, as knowledge holders travel the path of belonging--delivering their skills, knowledge, and talents, to their relatives. For the communities we serve, we may call this path 'good life' or 'the good red road.'



*The medicine wheel, while represented differently by various Native communities, is a common symbol to many of the peoples of the Northwestern Plains and beyond. With respect, we recognize that each community's expressions of Indigenous ways of knowing are 'as they were given' to them and we honor those differences.

A student's path toward growth and leadership at Montana State University may be seen as beginning with the student's first visit to campus, and continuing from matriculation, through each experience in which participation moves from *Introducing* to *Equipping* to *Engaging* and *Reciprocating* until the student leaves their campus home to continue their journey onward. Each individual is a knowledge holder whose gifts and understandings are valued. Individuals may enter into participation at any stage of development or mastery.

Introducing may occur, for example, when a new student arrives and comes to know the land--that of the campus and the valley in which the campus resides. *Equipping* may occur when the student participates in a course which takes students out on the land with Native plant knowledge holders and the protocols around harvesting, or the stories and Indigenous names for plant relatives. *Engaging* flows from that experience as students begin to apply newly gained knowledge and awarenesses in their own lives and time spent on the land outside of class. *Reciprocating* emerges as the student engages with newfound knowledge of place in a way that allows them to teach others, and perhaps act as stewards of the land, themselves.

As mastery advances in any area, the value of 'generosity' is emphasized in which students are encouraged to think of the well-being of others and share their gifts so that the student can say, "my life has purpose."⁸ This path from *introducing* to *reciprocating* is a journey to belonging as represented by 'home' in the center of the model. Our community members have told us in multi-various ways that "a sense of belonging" is essential to transition and resilience while students are at MSU. While "success" for them may or may not be defined in the institutional terms of "recruitment and retention," a sense of belonging allows students to succeed in ways that are meaningful to their families and communities. For example, when a student is needed at home for ceremony or because a community member has passed, the Department may provide emergency financial assistance to help the student get home. And instructors are strongly encouraged to work with the student to develop alternate due dates for unfinished course work. This practice applies not only to singular courses but also to degree programs. Deadlines are important, but are also understood as cultural constructs; the extent to which they are enforced depends on other factors that are not always under the control of the student or their Home community.

⁸ Larry K. Bendrtro Dr. Martin Brokenleg, & Steve Van Bockern, *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future* (Sedona, AZ: National Educational Service, 1990).

To succeed at MSU and in life, as a Native American/Indian, it is important to know who you are and where you come from. Stand strong in your beliefs and values, and fight for what is right for yourself and others around you. Don't doubt your worth, because you are worth more than you'll ever know. And remember that there is always somebody that cares and supports you.

--anonymous community member survey response

The four quadrants of our campus home (lodge), *Knowledge, Relationship, Land, and Sovereignty* represent the work that the Department of Native American Studies does in academics, student success, campus and community engagement. These make up the scaffolding upon which students may develop their own senses of empowerment and belonging. MSU NAS commits to creating an environment in which students 'path of belonging' can unfold while honoring the understanding that empowerment is something each individual does for oneself.⁹ In the following pages, each quadrant of the Student Well-being model is defined and then given life in the form of concrete examples.



Chontay Mitchell, center, a music technology student at Montana State University, leads a drum song to begin the festivities of Indigenous People's Day, Monday, Oct. 8, 2018, on the MSU campus mall in Bozeman, Mont., prior to an announcement of the building of the Native American Hall with the help of a \$12 million pledge from the Keneda Fund combined with contributions from donors. MSU Photo by Adrian Sanchez-Gonzalez

⁹ Larry K. Bendtrto Dr. Martin Brokenleg, & Steve Van Bockern, *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future* (Sedona, AZ: National Educational Service, 1990).

I think native students need to get comfortable asking questions and getting outside their comfort zones by trying new things. Admitting you don't know something is the first step to figuring out your struggle. Then you can take action and push your limits by new endeavors.

--anonymous community member survey response

Knowledge includes one's personal story, communal story, language, and reciprocity in sharing the stories one can share (knowledge transference). Critically, knowledge resides in the whole. "We all know parts, and we all sit in a different place."¹⁰ The expertise of each student, representative of their own place and community, is welcomed and essential in the learning process. Our personal stories are that of our own experience, our families, communities, and the very places to which we belong. Native languages are vital warehouses of traditional knowledge and, therefore, are highly emphasized as the place where native knowledge resides and is passed from generation to generation. To honor and build on the expertise that each student brings with them, NAS courses provide opportunities for students to express and explore *who they are* through cooperative group assignments, class discussions and peer learning. We know through course evaluations and student feedback that this formal and informal sharing between students provides some of the most profound and memorable moments for native and non-native students alike.

In an undergraduate Native Food Systems course, an Indigenous student told a story in class of her work in her own community around food sovereignty. Some time after the class, in conversation with the professor, she tearfully expressed surprise that some of her peers (most of whom were non-native) had, themselves, been moved to tears by her story, and that many of them had approached her in person and over social media to thank her for sharing her experiences and vision. This student was able to move from *Introducing* to *Reciprocating Knowledge* in the space of one semester, and in some ways in the space of one class.

¹⁰ Mary Hermes and Erin Dyke, "Still Flourishing: Enacting Indigenizing Language Immersion Pedagogies in the Era of US Common Core State Standards," in *Handbook of Indigenous Education*, ed. Elizabeth Ann McKinley and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2019), 377–99, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-3899-0_21, 12.

A place to feel a connection. Most Native students come from smaller communities where that is one of the larger aspects of everyday life. We all need to have the feeling of connection to survive so creating a space where native students and those who are intrigued/inspired by the sense of community can come together and create lasting bonds.

--anonymous community member survey response

Relationship with 'all that is'--self, family, community, human and non-human relatives, the land and the water--is the context of growth, understanding, sharing and ultimately, personal and communal *empowerment* (an aspect of *sovereignty*). Here we practice the core cultural values foundational to Indigenous ways of being. Our students, staff, and faculty acknowledge the tension that cultural identity holds on relationships within Indigenous Communities. Indigenous confidence and sense of self have been impacted by the losses of colonization and forced assimilation. Questions of who is Indian-enough and 'identity politics' burden our relationships with ourselves and one another. Through surveys and interviews with our students and faculty, identity-work has emerged as an outstanding part of our students' experience.¹¹ There is a clear link between healing from historical trauma and developing a strengthened sense of belonging that is particularly tied to identity-work in the Native American context.¹² Our students have named cultural and spiritual work as important to facilitating identity-work--including opportunities for prayer, language, and traditional knowledge sharing. Blackfeet researcher, Iris Pretty Paint Heavy Runner and her colleague, Kathy Marshall, summarize the journey in this quadrant of the well-being model in their observation that:

Resilience is the natural, human capacity to navigate life well. It is something every human being has -- wisdom, common sense. It means coming to know how you think, who you are spiritually, where you come from, and where you are going. The key is learning how to utilize innate resilience, which is the birthright of every human being. It involves understanding our inner spirit and finding a sense of direction.¹³

¹¹ "Montana State University Department of Native American Studies Community Engagement Report for WINHEC Accreditation," Survey & Interviews (Bozeman, MT, June 2019); Patrick Jeffers, "Summary of Conclusions for WINHEC Report: Interviews Conducted with MSU Indigenous Students" (Master's Thesis, 2019).

¹² Joseph P. Gone, "Redressing First Nations Historical Trauma: Theorizing Mechanisms for Indigneous Culture as Mental Health Treatment," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 50, no. 5 (2013): 683–706, <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1177/1363461513487669>.

¹³ Iris Heavy Runner (Pretty Paint) and Kathy Marshall, "'Miracle Survivors,'" *Tribal College Journal* 14, no. 4 (Summer 2003): 14. "Spirituality includes our interconnectedness with each other (relationships), the

Working from the premise that Heavy Runner and Marshall put forth--culture is the place where our resiliency resides--we see our students on a continuum that begins with being "at promise" rather than "at risk." We are striving to work with students to create opportunities for self-empowerment, healing, and where cultural engagement as a source for resilience may occur. With opportunities to connect with others like and unlike themselves, to recognize their own strengths by participating and contributing, students may come to know their own resilience, and be emboldened by the experience.

"It's like a big intertribal...by meeting people from other nations you see what challenges they are facing in their community and what kind of obstacles they are trying to overcome. The networking opportunities at MSU are one of the strengths here. We find we have brothers and sisters in all corners of the state. We need to build that sovereignty."

--Montana Duke Wilson,
Bachelors of Arts,
Political Science, MSU '17



MSU's Annual PowWow, now in its 45th year, is organized by students with the support of the American Indian Council and AI/AN Student Success Services, the student support side of the NAS Department.

sacredness of our inner spirit, our efforts to nurture and renew ourselves daily (prayer), balance and harmony (awareness), and our responsibility to be lifelong learners (growth)."

We need to feel empowered to approach the University about the indigenous experience on campus and in Bozeman. We need to be able to ask where are the native holidays on the calendar, where are the designated plots in the University greenhouse and gardens to grow indigenous medicine plants, sweetgrass, sages, roots, tobacco; where are the native sculptures commissioned on campus, and why do we have a larger than life statue of Abe Lincoln honoring him, yet there is no sculpture representing the largest mass execution of natives due to Abe Lincoln? There are emotional, under the surface colonial place keepers, reminders like that all over American college campuses. To help us be successful, to truly step up and honor the next generation- MSU has to honor our needs as a pre-contact intelligent force of bright minds. And recognize we haven't forgotten, our land relatives have not forgotten...

--anonymous community member survey response

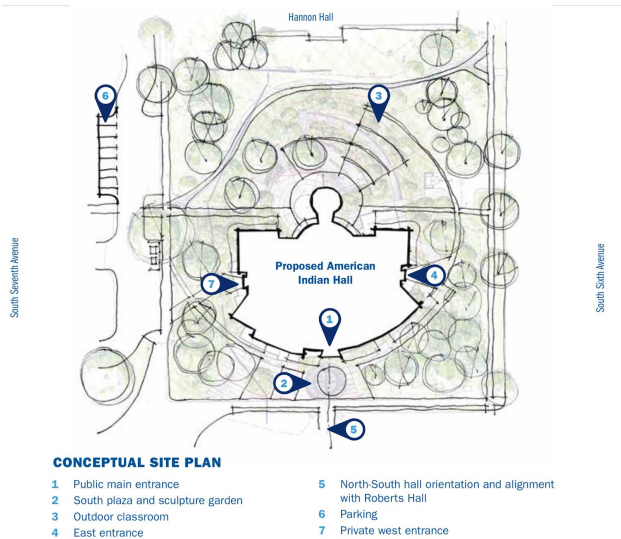
Land is the beginning of knowledge as students who come to MSU journey from their (big 'H') *Home* to their (little 'h') *home*. Recognizing that MSU is situated on Indigenous traditional territories and that each Native student is making a journey of place that is uniquely Indigenous, the land is the place from which all work and understanding flows. As students arrive in their *home*, they orient themselves, meet and acknowledge the land, come to know the land. As they grow in experience and responsibility, they will work on the land and, in turn, their knowledge will expand by their time spent there. What flows from the knowledge transferred from the experience of working on land is a responsibility to steward, protect, and nurture the land. In turn, these responsibilities lead to a growing base of knowledge which shall be taught and shared with each successive generation of students.

As intentional public acknowledgement of land and ancestors becomes a more accepted practice, all students are made more aware of the profound importance of these ancient connections. Building on that awareness through class field trips, extra curricular activities, and place-based research opportunities, students build connections with each other, and also come into relationship with the place that is their *home* for the time being. Their vested interest in this place then becomes a solid grounding for asking hard questions of university officials, and expecting real change that will help to indigenize not just Native American Studies, but the entire campus. We see this happening even now, as interested students, faculty and staff press for a new Native student center and surrounding grounds that reflect indigenous value systems.

We know before we get to college we are living in a world dominated by a hierarchy we didn't create. But the first year of higher education really pounds it into native students, we are living in a time where our land is held in captivity and we are captured in it- and unlike any other people group- there is no place else on earth that recognizes us, is ours. It can be shattering and overwhelming when it settles on you. In many ways you feel every choice, every decision when you're native is taken from you.
 --anonymous community member survey response

Sovereignty is first and foremost the internal and communally-maintained strength of Indigenous cultures--the self-determination that upholds cultural viability. It is also the ability of Indigenous peoples to maintain culturally distinct status, persevere and thrive in the face of historical and ongoing forces of oppression. Indigenous peoples are resilient and have consistently exercised resistance wherever colonization occurred. It is the work of MSU NAS to vigorously support sovereignty in the courses, experiences, and attitudes that it presents to students. There is a tension between cultural resilience/resurgence and the ongoing realities of settler colonialism. While at MSU, students travel a path of understanding that explores what it means to be sovereign nations/peoples within the occupation of colonizers. This experience is particularly difficult in the context of being Indigenous students in a state-run, predominantly non-Native, university. By making space for

The new "American Indian Hall" (a placeholder name for now) will house Native American Studies and, more importantly, it will be a highly visible, and visually expressive place where Indigenous students can immediately find themselves at home at MSU. With NAS's student and faculty leadership, the MSU administration has committed itself to developing interior and exterior designs that represent the identities of the main Indigenous groups in the region, so that students immediately feel recognized, and welcome. Plans are currently underway to develop new degree programming around Indigenous Food Sovereignty. The envisioned program would integrate experiential learning into the tending, harvesting and relationship with the plant relatives surrounding the new building.



Indigenous ways of knowing in the setting of Western education, students, faculty and staff in the NAS Department continually seek a deeper understanding of the larger context and dynamics of social conscience, colonialism, and resistance. Steeped in this evolving understanding, students move from learning to acting to teaching (and acting). Many find this experience important to the work of advocating for change to institutional (academic) and state policies affecting all matters related to Indigenous peoples and lands.



Students need mentoring from faculty and staff that not only provides counsel but also continuous proactive leadership to shepherd students through the academic journey.
--anonymous community member survey response

It would also be beneficial to have a community that doesn't exclude any Native students based on their blood quantum, relationships to other people, etc. would help a lot. We already have a lot of division in our own communities based on those factors that it shouldn't transfer over to University.
--anonymous community member survey response

Well-being does not translate well to the institutional language of 'standards.' Instead, we may think of the outcomes of student well-being as skills, talents, understandings, and competencies--the very personal bundle of assets which have been nurtured by the individual, family and teachers throughout each person's life and are believed to contribute to success in learning and life. MSU NAS strives to nurture, protect, and empower each student's unique assets. Further, the Department appreciates the identity work that happens when students come to the University. By embracing a model of student well-being that honors the categories of *Knowledge, Relationship, Land, and Sovereignty*, we seek to preserve and expand the space in which Indigenous students at MSU can explore their own ways of knowing and being in relationship with the land and the diversity of other Native and non-Native individuals attending this predominantly non-Native, public research university; we strive to offer a healthy, safe community in which their 'identity work' can be done, on a path toward belonging.

2. Indigenous Research Standards

What would it be like if tribal nations met at MSU to decide which research projects they wanted to move forward in regards to what each tribe knew their community needed; a marketplace where researchers offered their ideas and tribe make the choices. Choices and dignity cannot be side items if you want us to have success.

--anonymous community member survey response

A PROTOCOL GUIDE TO MONTANA TRIBES AND TRIBAL COLLEGES FOR MSU FACULTY AND STAFF

This guide is intended to assist MSU faculty and staff as we foster and facilitate working relationships in Montana Indian Country. It is intended to be much more than a directory; rather, this document will set a tone for true partnerships.

MSU-Tribal *Community-Based Participatory Partnership* respects preferences that are consistently expressed by tribal leadership, tribal colleges and Indian communities.

A. The university must operate within priorities and needs that originate from Indian Country.

At minimum, tribes and tribal colleges expect MSU faculty/staff to consult with them sufficiently prior to proposal-writing to ensure that any initiative affecting

their communities can be measured against local priorities. Last-minute requests for tribal endorsement will not be favored.

Most tribes and tribal colleges have strategic plans which designate priorities for their communities and programs. Given an opportunity, tribal entities will become proactive in initiating invitations for MSU engagement.

B. Indian communities' capacity to determine and execute their own futures is paramount.

MSU should focus on outreach and research that will enhance, in a lasting way, the tribes' ability to plan, research, develop and administer their own programs.

C. Tribal entities are ready for and interested in real partnerships rather than one-way relationships.

MSU and tribal entities should develop agreements for articulation, research or service that define respective roles and expectations.

D. Sustainable commitments are necessary in all initiatives.

Tribes and the university will pursue initiatives that result in durable outcomes – and relationships. While the transient nature of some funding sources is a recognized reality, consideration must always be given to relationships that are dependable and lasting. Tribes and tribal colleges are less interested in short-term commitments that are characterized by sporadic visits at the convenience of MSU personnel.

E. Tribal and/or tribal college research regulations are subject to strict compliance.

Most of the tribes and/or tribal colleges have Institutional Review Boards. MSU researchers must be certain to understand and comply with each tribe's regulatory process. The MSU Office of Sponsored Programs has information regarding specific Montana tribal IRBs.

In addition, The Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council has an approved IRB that is applicable when there is not an applicable tribal IRB or when research involves more than one Montana tribe (see the section on the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council for more information).

F. Tribes and tribal colleges require respect for their intellectual property.

Ownership of MSU-sponsored research product involving tribal people or resources should be considered and resolved in agreement with tribal

authorities before research commences. Matters like data collection, data repository, research publication, etc. must be specified. Joint authorship should be considered whenever possible.

G. Tribes and tribal colleges expect equitable treatment in fiscal matters.

Whenever possible, MSU grant development for initiatives involving Indian Country should give consideration to funding for tribal participation. Further, most tribes and/or tribal colleges have approved indirect cost rates which might be applicable to federal grants that involve tribal participation.



3. Indian Education for All in Higher Education

Understanding cultural practices, such as smudging, gifting, humility, mourning, respect for elders and many more would help to support, value and strengthen communication and sense of belonging at PWIs (primarily white institutions) for AI students.¹⁴

-Cheryl Polacek Birdhat, EdD

Article X of the 1972 Montana Constitution reads "The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its

¹⁴ Cheryl Polacek Birdhat, "Different Hunting Grounds: American Indian Tribal College Student Perceptions of Predominantly White Institutions" (Montana State University, 2017) 134.

educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity.” From this declaration flows the seven guiding principles of the Indian Education for All (IEFA) Act.¹⁵

These **seven elements** are the guiding principles behind Indian Education for All. Tribal histories and contemporary tribal members, governments, and nations have shaped and are shaping the social and political landscape of Montana. *An educated and contemporary Montana citizen has basic knowledge of Montana tribes.*

1. There is great diversity among the twelve sovereign tribes of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories, and governments. Each tribe has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana.
2. Just as there is great diversity among tribal nations, there is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined, and redefined by entities, organizations, and people. There is no generic American Indian.
3. The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs. Additionally, each tribe has its own oral histories, which are as valid as written histories. These histories predate the “discovery” of North America.
4. Though there have been tribal peoples living successfully on the North American lands for millennia, reservations are lands that have been reserved by or for tribes for their exclusive use as permanent homelands. Some were created through treaties while others were created by statutes and executive orders. The principle that land should be acquired from tribes only through their consent with treaties involved three assumptions:
 - I. Both parties to treaties were sovereign powers.
 - II. Indian tribes had some form of transferable title to the land.
 - III. Acquisition of Indian lands was solely a government matter not to be left to individual colonists or states.

¹⁵ Montana Office of Public Instruction, “Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians,” Office of Public Instruction, MT, accessed July 9, 2019, <https://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page%20Files/Indian%20Education/Indian%20Education%20101/essentialunderstandings.pdf>.

5. There were many federal policies put into place throughout American history that have affected Indian people in the past and continue to shape who they are today. Many of these policies conflicted with one another. Much of Indian history can be related through several federal policy periods:

Colonization/Colonial Period, 1492 - 1800s

Treaty-Making and Removal Period, 1778 – 1871

Reservation Period - Allotment and Assimilation, 1887 - 1934

Tribal Reorganization Period, 1934 - 1953

Termination and Relocation Period, 1953 - 1968

Self-Determination Period, 1975- Present

6. History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller.

With the inclusion of more and varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from American Indian perspectives frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell.

7. American Indian tribal nations are inherent sovereign nations and they possess sovereign powers, separate and independent from the federal and state governments. However, under the American legal system, the extent and breadth of self-governing powers are not the same for each tribe.

IEFA is concerned with creating a positive society in which Indigenous peoples/students can be comfortable, valued, and included. Montana has been a leader in establishing educational standards for all students of Indian Education. However, failure to fund such measures has meant the limited application of IEFA and has not yet resulted in effective integration at the higher education level to the degree that it is incorporated across the disciplines and that all staff, faculty, and students are aware and equipped with understanding.

This effort is now underway and the MSU Department of Native American Studies is



involved at the ground level with the belief that formalizing opportunities for IEFA for staff and students at the higher education level will build a stronger society, enriched by cross-cultural sharing and social consciousness. This effort will have direct impacts on Indigenous Student Well-being and the way in which MSU researchers conduct themselves in working in partnership with Native communities.

Disclosure Statement:

Montana State University Department of Native American Studies agrees to disclose to the WINHEC Accreditation Authority during the time of accreditation any and all such information as the Authority may require in executing its review and accreditation functions, within the scope of applicable cultural protocols and legal privacy requirements.

Relationship with the Accreditation Authority:

Montana State University Department of Native American Studies affirms the acceptance of the WINHEC Accreditation Authority conditions and related policies and agrees to comply with these conditions and policies as currently stated or as modified in accordance with Authority policy as stated in the WINHEC Accreditation Handbook, issued August 2018.

Further, Montana State University Department of Native American Studies agrees that the Accreditation Authority may, at its discretion, make known to any agency or members of the public that may request such information, the nature of any action, positive or negative, regarding its status with the Authority. The Authority treats institutional self-study reports and evaluation committee reports as confidential. The institution, however, may choose to release the documents.

Origins

The MSU Department of Native American Studies *Indigenous Student Well-being Model* was developed during the academic year 2018-2019 through the dedication and work of the WINHEC Accreditation Steering Committee. Data which supports our conclusions are:

- An online survey of Native community members and leaders, alumni, current and former students.

- A broad series of interviews conducted by graduate students Patrick Jeffers and Jill Falcon Mackin, undergraduate McNair Scholar Shelian Lame Bull, and faculty member, Dr. Kristin Ruppel. NAS Academic Services Coordinator, Rachel Tang and high school student Paul Mackin also contributed their skills in graphic design and visualization.
- The work of MSU researchers of Dr. Cheryl Birdhat Polacek, Dr. Catherine Johnson, Dr. Sweeney Windchief, Dr. Iris Heavy Runner Pretty Paint, and former MSU NAS Katz Endowed Chairs, Dr. Joseph Gone and Bill Yellowtail.
- The 30+ years of institutional memory of the numerous individuals who have dedicated their lives and careers to carving out and holding space for Indigenous students at MSU, including Dr.'s Walter Fleming, Wayne Stein, Henrietta Mann, Matt Herman, student support staff members (past and present) Rita Sands, Lisa Perry, Nick Ross-Dick, Jim Burns, Dan Voyich, Sarey Sebern, Lisa Stevenson, the many changing members of the MSU Elders Council, past and present MSU presidents Mike Malone, Jeff Gamble, Waded Cruzado, and many, many others who will be recognized in a history of Native American Studies at MSU, currently being written by Dr. Walter Fleming, NAS Department Head.

Indigenous Research Standards were developed in 2008 through:

- The input of Native communities state-wide as gathered by Bill Yellowtail, former Katz Endowed Chair (NAS) and tribal liaison for Montana State University.
- These standards will soon come under review and be updated under the newly developed Indigenous Research Initiative, founded by the Department of Native American Studies and to be led by the newly appointed Katz Endowed Chair, Loren BirdRattler (2019-2023).

Montana's *Indian Education for All Act*:

- Originally mandated in the 1972 Montana Constitutional review, Article X, Section 1(2) of the Montana Constitution says that our state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their culture.
- The foundation for guiding Indian Education for All began in 1999 when American Indian educators from the Montana tribes met in Helena to discuss the most important issues regarding Montana tribes that all Montanans need to understand. The product of those discussions is the publication, "Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians."
- In 2019, Montana Office of Public Instruction again worked closely with Montana tribal leaders and educators to revise the "Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians."