



# Honoring Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Community College Programs

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...

“It is important to know that this program was built on the voices of Native people. It’s not something others can say, that a program was so directly influenced by tribal people, language speakers, elders, and community leaders.”

- *Jon Greendeer, culture clan member*

...

“I knew that we needed to document how we came together as nations and did some of the hard work that needed to be done.”

- *Paul Ninham, governance clan member*

# Acknowledgements

Special thanks to all who participated in making the Indigenous Ways of Knowing project possible. Participants include members and leaders from tribes and nations across Wisconsin. The 15 individuals interviewed as part of this project are indicated below with an asterisk.

## Indigenous Ways of Knowing Project Team

- \***Susie Crazy Thunder**, tribal outreach coordinator, Nicolet College; member, Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe'
- \***Brandon Thoms**, former Indigenous Ways of Knowing project coordinator, Nicolet College; member, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
- \***Laura Wind-Norton**, associate vice president of academic services, Nicolet College

## Culture Clan

- \***Jon Greendeer**, former president and member, Ho Chunk Nation
- Brian Jackson**, former president, Wisconsin Indian Education Association; member, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
- \***Alton “Sonny” Smart**, professor emeritus, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Sociology/Social Work Department; member, Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
- \***Tom Wilding**, geography/geology instructor, Nicolet College

## Governance Clan

- \***Patrick Burns**, financial aid manager, Nicolet College
- Sommer Drake**, vice chair, Indian Community School, Milwaukee; member of the Oneida Nation
- Jason Dropik**, head of Indian Community School, Milwaukee; member of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
- \***Paul Ninham**, former elected Councilman, Oneida Nation

## History Clan

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- Brandon Luedtke**, history instructor, Nicolet College
- \***Alton “Sonny” Smart**
- \***Uncle Ernie St. Germaine**, founder, American Birkebeiner; co-author, Lac du Flambeau Family Circles curriculum; retired chief tribal judge, Lac du Flambeau and Lac Courte Oreilles; retired faculty, National Judicial College, University of Nevada, Reno; traditional peacemaker; member, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians

## Language Clan

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- \***Elizabeth DeVore**, English instructor, Nicolet College
- Donald Keeble**, Forest County Potawatomi Museum director; member, Forest County Potawatomi Band
- Wayne Valliere**, Ojibwe language teacher, nationally recognized artist; member, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
- Leanne Vigue**, former registrar, Nicolet College; recognized descendant, Menominee Nation

## Nicolet College Leadership

- \***Kate Ferrel**, president, Nicolet College
- \***Dianne Lazear**, board chair, Nicolet College

This report was prepared by Dr. Julie Johnson of **StrategyForward Advisors**, a postsecondary policy and strategy firm committed to transforming postsecondary education so learners can achieve their goals, with contributions from Janette Martinez on data, Colleen Pawlicki of Troy Street Professional Services on editing, and Andy Sherman of Can of Creative on design.

The traditional woodland floral designs seen throughout this report were created for Nicolet College by artist Michelle Reed of the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians.



# Chapter 1

Native Communities,  
a College, and a Need



# Introduction

In 2019, Native communities in northern rural Wisconsin and Nicolet Area Technical College (Nicolet College) embarked on a plan to establish pathways to postsecondary education for Indigenous learners. The goal was to create a curriculum and grant credit for prior knowledge in Native culture, governance, history, and language towards a technical certificate and associate degree. The project closely adhered to Native pedagogy and ways, and curriculum was developed by Indigenous leaders and members of area tribes with the support of college faculty and staff.

This report attempts to tell the story of the **Indigenous Ways of Knowing** (IWOK) project from the perspective of those involved. We do not capture the voices of all participants and, as such, recognize that the story may be incomplete. We seek to honor the experience, perspective, and insight of those represented here through their voices and stories.

## TERMS

### **Indigenous, Native American, American Indian, Native, Tribal:**

These terms are used interchangeably to refer to any of the peoples of the 11 federally-recognized and one state-recognized sovereign nations whose territories lie within the state of Wisconsin.

### **Eurocentric:**

Focusing on European culture or history to the exclusion of a wider view of the world; implicitly regarding European culture as preeminent (Google Dictionary).

### **Western:**

Used to describe non-Native populations, entities, and systems to compare and contrast ways of accumulating, recognizing, and valuing knowledge in postsecondary education.

## SOVEREIGN NATIONS

Wisconsin is home to 11 federally-recognized and one state-recognized American Indian nations. The Nicolet College district has the second highest population of American Indians (16%) in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). The district is situated among three federally-recognized American Indian tribes:

- **Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians** (Lac du Flambeau): The Lac du Flambeau reservation is spread across 24,000 acres of wetlands, with more than 260 lakes. The name Lac du Flambeau means “Lake of Torches” and comes from this band’s practice of harvesting fish at night by torchlight. Their language is Ojibwe.
- **Mole Lake (Sokaogon) Band of Lake Superior Chippewa** (Mole Lake): There are 1,500 Mole Lake tribal members, 500 of whom live on the nearly 5,000 acre reservation located in Forest County. This band is known for its wild rice harvests and traditional method of spearing fish. Sokaogon means “Post in the Lake” people, likely referring to a sacred petrified tree near the lake. Ojibwe is the language of Mole Lake.



- **Forest County Potawatomi (FCP):** Potawatomi means “Keeper of the Fire.” It is in reference to the Council of Three Fires, an alliance among the Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Odawa, and FCP’s task to maintain the sacred fire. FCP is the largest employer of Forest County. The Potawatomi language is Bodwéwadmí.

Beyond these nations, there may also be Indigenous people and families in the Nicolet College district from the other eight federally-recognized tribes in Wisconsin and the one state-recognized tribe, including:

- **Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa**
- **Brothertown Indian Nation**
- **Ho-Chunk Nation**
- **Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa**
- **Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin**
- **Oneida Nation**
- **Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa**
- **Saint Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin**
- **Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohican Indians**

Six of the 11 federally-recognized tribes are Ojibwe, and many Native families have multi-tribal identities.

## NICOLET COLLEGE

Nicolet College, located in the Northwoods of Wisconsin, serves 1,800 students in associate degree programs and more than 3,000 students in workforce, technical certificate, and other training and enrichment programs. While it is the smallest institution in WTCS, it has the second largest district, comprising 92,000 people across 4,000 square miles. The college is known for its flexible offerings across 73 credential programs. The college has an art gallery and a student-run restaurant through its culinary program. It boasts outdoor enrichment programs, such as wild mushroom hunting, cranberry foraging, mountain biking, kayaking, fly fishing, and outdoor photography. It offers Nicolet Promise, a tuition-free program for eligible students, and partners with the community to provide services to students.

Nicolet College sits on the ancestral lands of the Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Menominee nations and recognizes the importance of these communities. The college has offered courses in local tribal communities across the years in an effort to be more accessible to Native learners. It has also sought to better support its Native learners and invest in local tribal communities. Native American students make up Nicolet College’s single largest community of color at 4%.

In the 1970s, the college established a Native American Center on campus to support student success, assist faculty with curriculum, and engage local sovereign nations. At its peak, the office had five staff, but over time and due to funding constraints, the office morphed into its current iteration of Tribal Outreach, staffed by a tribal outreach coordinator. In this role, the tribal outreach coordinator is charged with collaborating broadly across tribal communities, governments, and relevant agencies. The coordinator provides a presence on reservations and fosters relationships with local tribes. The coordinator is also tasked with supporting Native learners across student services, assisting with contract programs and workshops for Native populations, and overseeing campus cultural events.



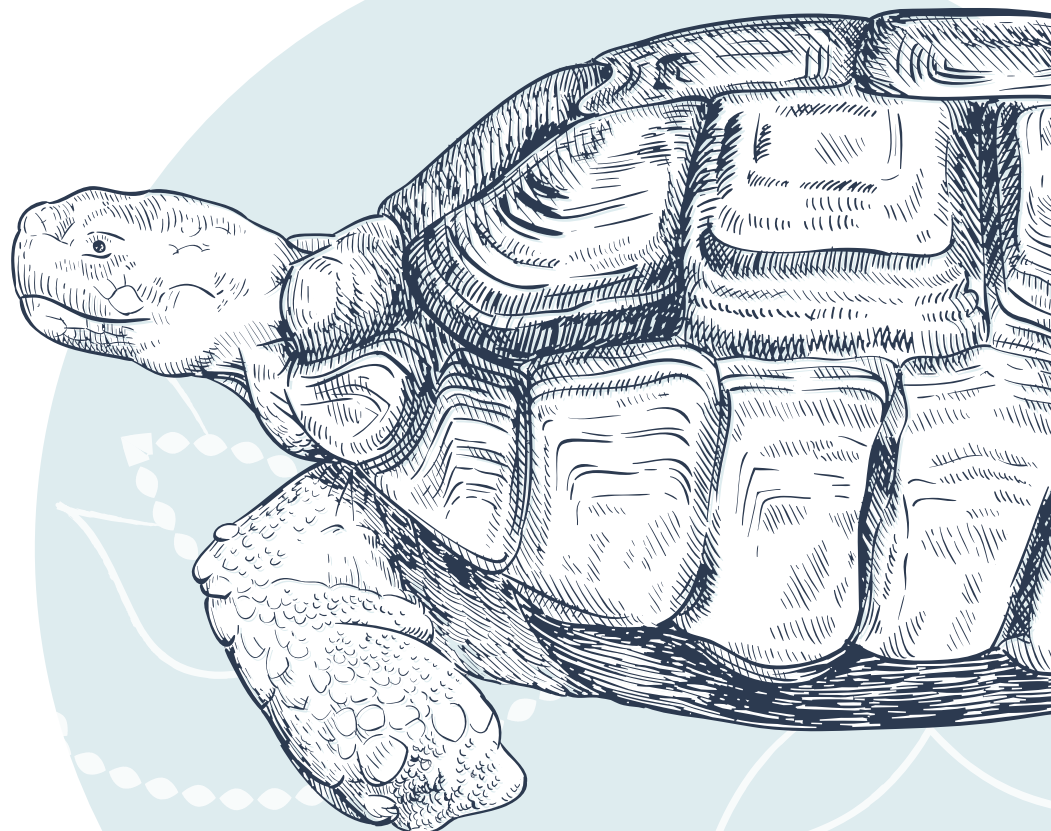


## IDENTIFIED NEED

The need to prioritize postsecondary education for Native learners has been clear. The rate of postsecondary credential completion for the 25,000 American Indians in Wisconsin was 26% in 2019, far below the overall state's rate of 55% (**A Stronger Nation, Lumina Foundation**). One significant barrier to increasing education attainment beyond high school has been the lack of cultural relevance in postsecondary curriculum. Indigenous people have not seen themselves or their cultural identities reflected in institutions or programs. As such, the lack of any sense of belonging in postsecondary institutions has been profound.

However, as major employers in the Nicolet College district, the Lac du Flambeau, Mole Lake, and Forest County Potawatomi tribes have long prioritized workforce training and postsecondary education. The college responded to this interest but lacked any specific programs on Native culture, history, governance, or language. In the University of Wisconsin (UW) system, UW Madison offers an American Indian Studies bachelor's degree and UW Green Bay has a First Nations doctoral degree, yet across the 16 colleges in WTCS, no such program existed.

Wisconsin provides Native education at the K-12 level. In 1989, the state enacted legislation to establish Wisconsin American Indian Studies for grades 4-12, known as Wisconsin Act 31 (**Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**). This act required all public schools to provide information about the history, culture, and tribal sovereignty of the state's 11 federally-recognized tribes and nations. While instruction is not provided in a standard, compliant, or fully resourced way across all public schools, it establishes the beginning of a pathway in Native education.



## Paving the Way: Native American Tribal Management

In 2002, Nicolet College launched a Native American Tribal Management program. This 10-credit program seeks to “develop the skills of people who work or plan to work in a First Nation environment including fundamental management skills, and how a Native nation’s legal, political and cultural context impact an organization’s work” (**Tribal Management program**). Learners currently receive a technical certificate, which puts them on a path to the Business Management associate degree program and can then connect to a bachelor’s degree program in the UW system.

The program was started by Dianne Lazear, who first came to Nicolet College in the 1980s working in the Native American Center office. Through that experience, Lazear, who is currently chair of the board for the college, learned about the need within the tribes for management, administration, and governance training. It was not until years later, after Lazear had left the college to teach in the UW system and returned to Nicolet College as an instructor in the business management program and then as a dean, that she started developing courses that would become the Tribal Management program. She relied on academic experts and resources from graduate programs at other institutions and her previous experience working with Native tribes to design the program.

The initial curriculum was not developed with local tribes but utilized an Indigenous-centered viewpoint and incorporated local tribal histories and issues. It had strong support from the Lac du Flambeau and Mole Lake tribes. Ideas and issues that arose from students in these classes were integrated into the curriculum. Courses were offered in the Lac du Flambeau and Mole Lake communities, and tribal leaders served as mentors and guest speakers. Tribes gave employees paid time off to attend these courses, and non-Native students enrolled as well.

...

**“For the Indigenous students, they felt like they could finally swim in water that wasn’t foreign, as the frames of reference finally fit around their life. Non-Native students also drank it up. It was eye-opening and had an insider perspective and feel.”**

*- Dianne Lazear, board chair, Nicolet College*

Intentionality was key in the program’s design. Students received culturally-sensitive support services and had embedded tutors. A tribal liaison was assigned to facilitate the relationship between the college and the tribes.

...

**“It always felt like we were spanning bridges and making sure students could operate and do business in a variety of worlds.”**

*- Dianne Lazear*

The success of this program would become the launching point for Indigenous Ways of Learning.



## **Chapter 2**

# The Making of Indigenous Ways of Knowing





## Designing the Project

...

**“We would not have been in a position to do Indigenous Ways of Knowing if current and previous staff had not done all that had gone before. This project was built on decades of work by staff at the college and in our tribal communities.”**

*- Laura Wind-Norton, associate vice president of academic services, Nicolet College*

### GRANT FUNDING: ALL LEARNING COUNTS

In 2018, Nicolet College learned of a new grant from Lumina Foundation called **All Learning Counts**, which focused on recognizing learning that occurred outside of college and creating pathways to postsecondary credentials from such learning. The college’s leadership knew the grant could be an opportunity to do more with local sovereign nations. As such, the college’s president contacted the institution’s tribal outreach coordinator, Susie Crazy Thunder, to gain her input.

...

**“All Learning Counts aligned with our vision for how we wanted to relate to and serve our three tribal communities.”**

*- Kate Ferrel, president, Nicolet College*

### PARTNERSHIP: WISCONSIN INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

In addition to serving as the college’s tribal outreach coordinator, Crazy Thunder is also a board member of the Wisconsin Indian Education Association (**WIEA**), whose mission is to “promote educational opportunities for Indian people in Wisconsin through a unified effort of Indian and non-Indian members interested in the social and economic advancement of Indian people” (WIEA). WIEA works with educators across the state’s federally-recognized tribes. One of its priority initiatives was to support Wisconsin Act 31 - the teaching of Wisconsin American Indian culture, history, and tribal governance.

Crazy Thunder was aware of the gap in American Indian Studies between K-12 education and a bachelor’s degree program. Knowing that Nicolet College had several articulation agreements with the UW system, the grant seemed like the perfect opportunity to address the gap of community college-level introductory Native curriculum and create a path to both an associate and bachelor’s degree.

...

**“When the Lumina grant opportunity came along, we were perfect for it. We have three tribal communities. As a WIEA board member, it just made sense to me to fill that gap.”**

*- Susie Crazy Thunder, tribal outreach coordinator, Nicolet College*

With the college and WIEA mutually aligned on increasing educational attainment of American Indians in the district, the president of Nicolet College and the president of WIEA signed an MOU to partner on the project. Participants from both organizations met a dozen times to prepare the application, develop a logic model, collect the data, and begin planning for the project.

Nicolet College led the application process and was selected to participate in a two and a half year project; Many Ways of Knowing, which would become Indigenous Ways of Knowing, was funded. The grant would enable Nicolet College and WIEA to hire a project manager, provide faculty release time and professional development, include stipends for tribal elders and members for their participation, and host meetings and events to develop the project.

## POTENTIAL: CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING

Nicolet College already offered credit for prior learning (CPL) to prospective students who could demonstrate knowledge in certain areas. CPL grants college credit for learning that has occurred outside of the traditional academic environment (**Council for Adult and Experiential Learning**). This demonstration was shown through prior-learning assessments (PLA), which consists of written challenge exams, skill demonstration, performance assessments, or portfolio assessments to evaluate learning. The college knew under-represented student populations are 2.5 times more likely to complete a post-secondary credential if they receive CPL (**CAEL and WICHE**). However, their forms of PLA did not include community-based learning and experience, which exists in abundance among Native American tribal communities.

## BARRIERS TO REPRESENTATION

Long-term systemic issues had previously prevented colleges and Native communities from working together. It was clear that the curriculum would be more successful if Native American instructors were partners in teaching it. However, those who possess rich cultural knowledge handed down from generations are often not recognized in Western higher education as having the qualifications to teach at the associate degree level. In 2021, fewer than 1% of the faculty teaching in the WTCS identified as Native American (**WTCS**). IWOK hoped to address this.

## PROJECT GOALS

IWOK would focus on creating a new methodology for awarding credit for Indigenous community learning and having the new methodology added to the college's accepted forms of PLA. The specific aims of IWOK were to:

1. Develop a model and curriculum for mapping competencies and knowledge from Native communities to technical certificate and degree pathways.
2. Develop and test policies and practices to award credit for prior learning and experience in Native communities.
3. Establish a methodology for engaging Native American educators in teaching at the community and technical college level.

The plan also called for faculty and staff professional development, student recruitment, marketing, and student services. The hope was to create a framework that could be shared with other colleges in WTCS.



## PROJECT TEAM

Nicolet College put together the project team, consisting of Crazy Thunder, who developed the idea for the project, Laura Wind-Norton, then dean of University Transfer and Liberal Arts, who would ensure pathways to credit and transferability, and Brandon Thoms, who was recruited to serve as the IWOK project coordinator. Thoms, a member of Lac du Flambeau, was known for having positive and strong relationships with many tribes and their members across the state. He was also strongly rooted in culture based on his work with WIEA and Family Circles, a parenting and family program in Lac du Flambeau that anchored education and therapy in Indigenous culture, beliefs, and language.

...

“It was critical to have someone who could readily relate, listen, and absorb cross-cultural views and values. Brandon’s kind, respectful, and traditional leadership style was immediately embraced. He was the real Ogimaa [Ojibwe word for chief] of this project.”

- *Susie Crazy Thunder*

...

“Brandon had a good cultural foundation. He is a good communicator. Tribal people knew him as a cultural person first.”

- *Sonny Smart, culture and history clan member*



# Recruiting Subject Matter Experts

With the green light from Lumina Foundation, the project team began recruiting participants, including tribal elders and members and Nicolet College faculty and staff.

## TRIBAL ELDERS AND MEMBERS

Crazy Thunder and Thoms put together a list of tribal elders and members from across the tribes and nations who would have the expertise and influence to help design the curriculum. In tribal cultures, elders are revered as knowledgeable and responsible for ensuring the language, culture, and traditions of their people are carried on to the following generations.

...

**“We knew we needed to lean on the knowledge keepers in the community, people who were well known and well respected in their communities and Indian country in general.”**

*- Brandon Thoms, IWOK project team member*

Thoms and Crazy Thunder went to each person and requested their participation. At times, their outreach was accompanied by a gift of tobacco, which is a way of respectfully requesting assistance. At other times, it was through their personal relationships or their community network.

...

**“I’ve known Brandon since he was a boy. He came with tobacco and made the request. There isn’t anything an uncle won’t do for someone for whom they respect.”**

*- Uncle Ernie St. Germaine, history clan member*

...

**“I consider Susie Crazy Thunder an auntie. She has a lot of wisdom, insight, and love to give to me. It [my willingness to participate] came down to relationships.”**

*- Bawaajigekwe Boulley, history clan member*

Some Lac du Flambeau members served on the board and as representatives of WIEA, so they had awareness and support for the project. Others were cautious about joining for a variety of reasons, including the long history of cultural appropriation that Indigenous people have experienced by white people and Western culture. However, IWOK’s proposed approach and the list of those who agreed to participate signaled that this would be developed in a respectful and appropriate way.

...

**“I was taken aback when they asked me to be a part of this, as I don’t have any college experience, but I was also a bit shocked to know that this type of project was being considered. For that reason, I decided it was a worthy cause to dedicate my time to.”**

*- Muqsahkwat Corn, language clan member*



...

“There was a lot of discussion with our members about this at the start. We had to assure them that they would lead this work both now and beyond this project. Even guest speakers in our professional development series were concerned about their knowledge being appropriated.”

- *Susie Crazy Thunder*

## NICOLET FACULTY AND STAFF

Wind-Norton reached out to faculty and staff at the college to participate. Individuals were invited based on their relevant academic program expertise, prior knowledge, and experience working with Native American communities.

...

“Laura asked early on if I would be interested in joining the project. I had done past work at UW Platteville where I interacted with tribes through projects on tree rings in the Menominee forest and around boundary waters, where I worked with Canadian tribes.”

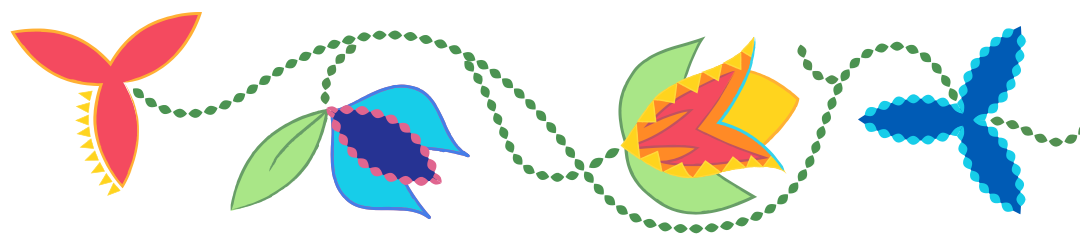
- *Tom Wilding, geography/geology instructor*

...

“I was asked to join the project and said I would be happy to support it based on my background. I worked in Green Bay public schools on curriculum development with Indigenous language. My prior degrees focused on oral traditional teaching methods and First Nations studies.”

- *Patrick Burns, financial aid manager*

While the majority of Nicolet participants were non-Native, they came to the project with humility, excitement, and a sense of responsibility to learn, listen, and engage in such a way as to honor the project.





## Native-Led Approach

Creating a curriculum and pathway that honored and valued Indigenous ways of knowing required the project to be both Native-led and structured according to Indigenous pedagogy and processes. This would become a fundamental component to its success.

...

**“Susie and I said from the beginning that it has to be done through an Indigenous lens. We wanted the tribes to be the very fiber of the content, competencies, and curriculum.”**

- *Brandon Thoms*

As such, tribal elders and members were viewed as the experts who would drive the project. Nicolet faculty and staff would figure out how to codify the knowledge into a framework that could count for credit towards a credential or degree at the college.

## PROJECT LAUNCH

IWOK was officially launched in October 2019. Participants convened at Nicolet College for a half day of introductions to the work and each other. The day began outside on the rocks by the lake.

...

**“It was the first time I had been up to the campus. It was a beautiful place - not only physically, but spiritually and culturally relevant to what I wanted to bring to the table. It made me realize that something special was going to occur.”**

- *Paul Ninham, governance clan member*

The project team was intentional to signal that the project would be structured according to Native culture and ways. The first meeting consisted primarily of Indigenous members.

...

**“The goal of the meeting was to build trust, introduce the project, gauge interest, hear feedback, and answer questions as to how this project could be different from others. We were demonstrating our commitment to them and to the project.”**

- *Susie Crazy Thunder*

The convening was Indigenously-led and consisted of customary and spiritual protocols. The project team opened the day with a drum, songs, and prayers. Youth sang on the drum to represent the future seven generations. An invocation was given by an elder who spoke for and represented the past seven generations. Indigenous members shared a feast of traditional foods and the practice of gift-giving to all who came.

...

**“It was very Indigenous. We were able to hear from everyone in the space. There was an invocation, guidance, and wisdom. Uncle Sonny grounded us in appreciation, connection, and belonging. Uncle Ernie spoke of purpose and identity.”**

- *Bawaajigekwe Boulley*

## CLANS AND CONSENSUS

After listening to each others' stories and perspectives, the full group decided to structure the project in accordance with the Ojibwe clan system structure, which is rooted in its historical foundation as a group or collective. The clan system has had functions in leadership, family, political structure, communication, social and cultural responsibilities, and spirituality. It was felt that it would be a good cultural term to use for this project.

...

**“It really seemed to fit. Everyone understands what clans are, what they are supposed to do.”**

- Paul Ninham

...

**“For us, clans are an identity marker. We introduce ourselves by our name, our clan, and where we are from.”**

- Bawaajigekwe Boulley

Employing a clan system also established a way of engaging with one another. The clan model is based on a foundation of respect, inclusion, and reciprocity and includes following a consensus model of agreement. In consensus, each participant has an equal say in the deliberation and decision-making process. This means taking the time that is needed to come to an agreement.

...

**“Our consensus model of decision making takes a long time. If you use a majority model, that leads to polarization. Members lose sight and just try to undo each other. In the consensus model, we focus on the main goal that we are trying to accomplish, not our differences. There is so much commonality. That’s how we move forward.”**

- Sonny Smart

## PRIORITIZING RELATIONSHIP

Operating within a traditional clan framework entailed bringing forth cultural protocols and the Indigenous ways in which Native members relate to and engage with one another. At the start of each clan meeting and full group meeting, time was made to ask each person how they were doing, no matter how long it took.

...

**“Acknowledging one another first and allowing each to speak or share was imperative to demonstrating our love and respect for those gathering with us.”**

- Susie Crazy Thunder

...

**“There was a lot going on in the world during this project. There were times when we just needed to share things and listen to each other.”**

- Bawaajigekwe Boulley



# Chapter 3

## The Four Clans and Faculty Development



## The Four Clans

Going into the project, the Nicolet project team knew they wanted to focus on Native culture, history, and language in alignment with the Wisconsin Act 31 curriculum. Through discussions, though, the full group added a fourth category: governance. These became their four clans, and everyone agreed to organize themselves around these clans. Members opted into clans that aligned with their knowledge, experience, and expertise, though it was recognized and celebrated that many clan members had strong cross-subject matter expertise.

Each clan was asked to:

1. Identify the topics and content in their subject area that could become the outline or curriculum for a course on that topic.
2. Determine how to assess the lived experience and knowledge of Indigenous learners in their subject area in order to grant them introductory college-level credit toward a credential or degree.
3. Develop a framework or rubric for assessment, known as a prior learning assessment.

Over the course of the project, each clan would meet regularly, typically monthly or more frequently, to develop their subject area. All clans came together at the full Nation convenings to share their work and seek further guidance and feedback from other clans and the full group, as is consistent within a clan system model. These meetings helped create alignment and common threads across the clans' work.

Each clan had 4-5 participants. They were led by Indigenous participants and supported by one Nicolet faculty or staff member, who helped translate the clan's insights into an assessment and curriculum framework for the college. Nicolet faculty and staff were careful to support the work, not drive it. In fact, over the course of the project, one of the elders would give a Nicolet College faculty member a special name in recognition of his role.

...

**“Ernie St. Germaine gave Brandon Luedtke, the Nicolet College history instructor, the name, Bizendaam Inninii [Ojibwe word], meaning ‘listening man.’ It is considered quite an honor.”**

- *Brandon Thoms*

The project team, Crazy Thunder and Thoms, staffed each clan, made sure that space was created for the process to be Native-led, and helped ensure that each clan could achieve its objectives. Crazy Thunder served as clan mother, or *Mindimooyenh* (Ojibwe word), which means an older woman who keeps it all together. Thoms served as *Skabewis* (Ojibwe word), the messenger to all.

...

**“Brandon and Susie did a wonderful job trying to keep four clans together and a dozen Indians from across Wisconsin all on task.”**

- *Paul Ninham*



## Culture Clan

The culture clan grappled with how to assess Indigenous culture. This was a complex endeavor. First, determining how to define Indigenous culture is a challenge when culture is who a person is and how they live.

...

**“Culture is all around us. I don’t believe philosophically that you can teach culture. You live culture. Yet, we had to develop objective criteria and standards for who qualifies for learning credits.”**

*- Jon Greendeer, culture clan member*

The clan had to determine how to measure culture. However, there is no such thing as a single, homogeneous Native culture. With 11 federally-recognized tribes and one state-recognized tribe in the state, the clan had to develop a plan to recognize and assess culture as it pertained to individuals of different tribes.

...

**“Tribeally, each family has a different understanding of culture. For example, an owl in one tribe’s culture is seen as a bad omen, while in another’s culture it is seen as just a messenger.”**

*- Brandon Thoms*

...

**“It is a big issue to have yourself assessed for who you are and who you perceive yourself to be. It requires tremendous respect for that to be successful, and it requires the student to trust who is assessing them.”**

*- Tom Wilding*

Through many discussions and stories, a curriculum began to surface. The clan organized cultural topics by Clan Structure, the Land, the People, and the Person. They developed a rubric that assessed knowledge from a beginning knowledge seeker to an empowered knowledge seeker. They defined terms and started to conceptualize multiple forms of PLA to demonstrate learning.

### CULTURE CONTEXT AS SHARED BY ALTON “SONNY” SMART

My master’s thesis was called, “More than beads and feathers.” At that time, when I was working as a high school guidance counselor, people were talking about being inclusive, but they were using a Eurocentric perspective. They wanted to bring in other cultural perspectives but only on the margins. They weren’t willing to engage them. It was more about seeing the symbols of a culture, not a deeper focus.





My work has been about how to really incorporate culture perspectives into social, cultural, and legal perspectives. I was appointed to be a tribal judge in 1985 to the present. At the time, tribes would adopt a Euro-Western paradigm. Assimilation and acculturation had gone on for the past 150 years. Tribal people were caught up in that process. In my master's thesis, I showed how there was a hemorrhaging of culture through each generation. This was very similar to other minority groups who assimilate to the dominant society's values and beliefs in order to be accepted. It was for cultural, political, and social reasons.

In the 1950s and 1960s, there was the Indian Relocation Act to move people from reservations to urban centers. The Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Catholic and Christian church had strong assimilation processes on reservations. The paradigm was to assimilate policies, programs, and schools. Once people got to the cities, those specific influences weren't as strong. People tried to find other people like themselves as a way of maintaining their cultural identity. They could speak and interact freely. Pow wows in urban areas became a powerful way to bring people together.

The Civil Rights of the 1960s included the American Indian Movement, which showed that it was okay to be who you are. Tribes were picking up on that cultural identity. In the 1970s, it became fashionable to use language. Before that, people were moving away from the language.

The Self Determination Act of 1975 said that tribes had the right to make their own decisions. The Bureau of Indian Affairs changed its role to self-determination rather than providing legal and social services. The act viewed cultural identity as being okay. Tribes started taking their own affairs into their own hands. They started hiring people.

President Johnson's Great Society policies to get rid of poverty provided money for social services and education. Tribes were a beneficiary of that. Tribes could apply for grants and decide how to use it. They started hiring Indian people and creating more employment.

A lot of tribal people had left to live in urban areas by this time. My mother went from living in the woods, surrounded by family, to living on cement with no family around. Families started to see their children become affected by the urban values, become more individualistic, exposed to gangs and fighting. Families wanted to raise their children in the communities they grew up with where there was sharing and helping. When families saw jobs opening on the reservation in the 1960s and 1970s, there was an influx of families moving back. In the 1980s, high stakes bingo created economic development and the opportunity of grants, which created jobs.

When I was going to school, I didn't see tribes wanting to integrate at a deeper level. They were still using the dominant paradigm. Tribal culture was always marginalized before. That has a deeper effect on the children, who see themselves as less than. Tribes then showed that paradigm. They hired educational people who would come in with the Eurocentric perspective and want to teach without looking at the cultural perspective. They were contributing to this marginalization, unconsciously. They thought they were doing good. I started to see this.





In the 1980s, we started the Family Circles program in Lac du Flambeau. I was trained as a counselor in Eurocentric models and perspectives. There wasn't a cultural perspective of interventions. I went through and found those that were still being used from a cultural perspective. Education and therapy are the same thing. You have to educate people to get them to behave differently. The best way is at a community level. If you do it at an individual level, they go back to the community and do not change. We started educating parents about the way of doing things, using our culture as the paradigm. We developed a curriculum for parent behaviors. We started incorporating language. Families really liked it. They kept coming all 14 weeks. They didn't want to stop.

I left to teach but came back. We had a grant that allowed me to interview elders. They were all fluent speakers. Many of them were born in wigwams. Their first language was Ojibwe. They would talk about parenting and ways of life. From this learning, we changed Family Circle to 20 weeks. A lot of families began incorporating those things into their lives - tribal names, spirituality, culture, language. All people needed was a spark.





## Governance Clan

Tribal governance encompasses the culture, history, and language of tribal people. This broad category included federal-, state-, and nation-level information related to governance, including everything from the history of what has gone before to current day constitutions from each tribe.

...

**“It was an expansive subject matter. We had powerful discussions about what the course could look like and how to develop it, which we refined over time.”**

- Patrick Burns

The governance clan approached the work by asking themselves what information someone would need to know to be ready to govern. For each topic area, the clan identified a process, the content to include, and a timeline of how to incorporate it into a course and an assessment. Then, in a later session, they would return to it, consider their earlier plans, and incorporate additional considerations. They continued such iteration, ongoing reflection, and engagement throughout the project.

The clan also focused on developing the skills needed for Native learners to govern, including topics like management, relational dynamics, and decision-making within the nation. They set robust standards for skill development.

...

**“Individuals need to be prepared for what the role of tribal governance entails.”**

- Paul Ninham

There was close attention paid to the student experience and progression of the course. Once the PLA and curricular framework was developed, the clan interviewed a prospective student to further refine their approach.

By the end of the project, the clan established seven major competencies or areas of responsibility that a student must know in the course and assessment. Each area of responsibility included multiple learning objectives that needed to be covered in that topical area. There was early exploration of the multiple forms of assessment that could be used to demonstrate proficiency, and a list of resources were compiled to assist with the teaching of this course.

### TRIBAL GOVERNANCE CONTEXT AS SHARED BY PAUL NINHAM

I served on the Council for the Oneida Nation for 12 years from 1999-2014, with a break in between. When I first started, I went in unprepared and didn't understand what tribal governance was. I was appointed to national organizations to do work on behalf of our region and our nation while having full-time responsibilities for the tribe.





I quickly surrounded myself with a small group of mentors. I made it through my first term and then flourished, but I wouldn't want anyone to go through what I did. That's why tribal governance is at the forefront of my mind. I continually have mentees. I've made it a habit to pull along individuals who bring me coffee and tobacco and ask for my advice.

I always envisioned a school exactly like Nicolet College offering courses to prepare Native students in Wisconsin to sit on their tribal councils. Native students could learn in person and online what they need to know to decide if they want to run for their council. Having a background in tribal governance before they run, campaign, get elected, take their oath of office, and make decisions for their tribal membership is a good way to move forward.

After the first cohort of folks go through and gain knowledge, seeing not just those folks becoming elected officials in their nation but within the administration of the tribe - from CEOs to gaming managers, Parks & Rec, Department of Public Works, Elder services, etc. - that's one thing that keeps me moving forward. It was exciting that there could be a possibility of Nicolet College being that place to prepare, help, and re-energize individual nations.





## History Clan

The history clan started their work with the benefit of having historical markers to draw from, yet they needed to determine how best to proceed with the project.

...

**“The thing about working with Indigenous people and pedagogy, we don’t always have a script and there’s not focus on the product, but rather the journey, though we will come to a product.”**

- *Bawaajigekwe Boulley*

The composition of the clan was significant, with two tribal elders. Ideas started to emerge through meetings that were full of storytelling, insights, and wisdom.

...

**“Uncle Ernie and Uncle Sonny are two powerhouses, two knowledge-bearers times infinity. They would drop knowledge and gems. Brandon Luedtke and I would do a lot of listening. Eventually, Brandon and I were assigned to meet and talk more in-depth on scope and sequence and competencies.”**

- *Bawaajigekwe Boulley*

## EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT AS SHARED BY BAWAAJIGEKWE BOULLEY

I am an educator. I engage a lot in professional learning and development. I am also a scholar and put myself in the position to learn through higher education. My mom is a retired teacher and reading specialist. College was inevitable for me, which wasn't the way for my peers. I had a role model. Both of my parents had gone through higher education. I did a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's degree in special education.

In K-12 education, we teach kids to abandon themselves. That is where equity is going now - that we need to change our ways so that access reaches everyone, not in the way that we think it should, but in the way the learner thinks it should.

When I was in high school and knew I was going to college, I knew I wasn't doing it for me. It was for the community. I didn't value myself to give myself that kind of care. I would do it for the community as a push back against white supremacy. I would work so hard to get rewarded. We still reward that grind culture. That's not healthy.

It wasn't until the doctoral program did I begin to think, what do I need as a learner? Standards are very ingrained in all of us, especially as a teacher. It took a lot of unlearning at that level and realizing that perfectionism steals joy. It will stunt your growth and steal your joy. I am learning to show up as my whole self, learning to share





my voice - that I have a voice and to share it - it's a practice and recovery journey. I don't want education to be something that people have to recover from later, which has been the historical context. It has been a place to oppress and dominate. The experience in this project, especially with the people I was with, was very rigorous in the transformation journey I was on. We were working on how to create a track that is aware of these ways of being that don't serve us, and not just pivot to a decolonized way of learning, but to a way that is also rooted in health, wealth, wellness, abundance, and original ways of being. But you can't do that until you look at being in this colonized space. It becomes about self and the collective at the same time. It is a doorway into healing.

Throughout this project, there was this unabashed, immense, extreme focus on belonging. If someone is coming into this program as a non-traditional student unsure of what they want to do, who is on the fringes and has these experiences of being marginalized, I want this decision to be something they don't regret, but be filled with health, wealth, abundance, wellness, and community.

This project was an opportunity to see the scholarship I was engaged in and the teaching I was raised with in this institutionalized context that I never thought was possible.

With belonging at the core, the clan came to two foundational decisions. First, the decision was made to shift the language away from "competencies," which is a technical term used to imply understanding and knowledge in a way that can be demonstrated. There was a sense that this term was deficit-based. Instead, the clan opted for the Anishinaabe framing of "responsibilities."

With the language in place, the clan developed a metaphor of tree rings to signify one's role in and understanding of history. There are seven rings, beginning with the self and expanding out to family/clans, community, and tribe-nation. The metaphor represents the connection and responsibilities of each ring to the other and how history or each story plays out. The tree ring metaphor then led the clan to the seven grandfather teachings from the Anishinaabe worldview, which helped the clan expand the rings out to the seventh generation, mother earth, and ancestors. The seven grandfather teachings also brought in the concepts of the role and trait of each stakeholder in the seven rings. From there, the group developed their six major content areas to focus on, each with detailed learning objectives to guide the assessments.





## HISTORY CONTEXT AS SHARED BY UNCLE ERNIE ST. GERMAINE

Everyone has a story. That is valid. I look back to my experiences starting school and the way I was treated. When I was in the 4th grade, I sat in the 7th row and the 7th seat in the back. Our history book had a picture of Wisconsin Indians in the back. They were "grandma" and "grandpa." They were ricing. I had done rice processing with my grandparents and had missed school because of it, which my teacher did not like. I couldn't wait until our class got to that chapter to talk about it - something that was so familiar to me. But, our teacher skipped over it at the end of the year and said it was not important. That was in 1958. I never forgot that. I thought and hoped it would end someday and that Indian students would never need to go through what I went through. In 1973, I was doing practice teaching. I saw Indians sitting in the back. It was 20 years later, and the Indians were still sitting in the back of the classroom.

From 1979-1982, I was in Rhinelander working on a curriculum project. I would go to schools and see the Indians still sitting in the back of the classroom. I would bring them forward to demonstrate dances. In one class, I asked who in the room was Indian. No one raised their hand. I knew there was an Indian boy in the room, but he was ashamed. I spoke to him in our Native language and asked him what his Indian name was. He said *Makoons* (Ojibwe word), which means "Little Bear." After that, everyone wanted an Indian name. My hope was to bring that little boy forward. Me being there did a lot for him.

That's what I see that this program can do. It can make Indian people who aren't going to college feel like what they have to offer is important. If we don't listen to them, who will? If this program can get them a step forward and make them feel good about it, it can accomplish a lot. Along the way, it will inspire others to discover who they are and not be ashamed and have to hide it.

If you get turned on to your own history, you become a historian and learn to love history. If we can do that for our young people and have the value of seeking knowledge, that was the value of this project. Our cultures preserve our stories. We get close to each other. We stay connected. We don't forget. That's what history is. It is about becoming valid, becoming important and respected.

I want to inspire you to preserve who your great grandparents were and preserve their stories. When I taught, I required my students to interview a grandparent or family member. "Go as far back as you can go," I would tell them. Preserve your own history. Then, I would have students get up in front of the class and tell a story from their paper.

There was one girl who did not know her grandmother well. I encouraged her to reach out. She was extremely hesitant but finally did. While she was at her grandmother's home, her grandma showed her a painting. When the grandmother unveiled it, it was a painting of "grandma," so the girl thought. The girl asked, "Who did this portrait of you?" Grandma said, "It is not me; it is my grandma, and I painted it."





The grandmother explained that there had been a long tradition amongst the women in their family for girls to paint portraits of their grandmothers. Inspired, the girl sat with her grandma and painted her portrait.

When the girl presented to the class, she shared that she had never painted before. In fact, she never thought she was any kind of artist. She then unveiled her painted portrait of her grandmother, and it looked like it had been done professionally. It was striking. We all sat, dumbfounded, and I could easily see the resemblance between grandma and granddaughter, the new found artist.

When I was in graduate school, I took an Indian history course. The professor, who was not Indian, was teaching from the book, and the book was not accurate. I shared what I knew, but because I did not follow the book, I received a "C" in that course. I took the issue to the chancellor and said, "Your university says my culture is not valid." I speak the language fluently. I grew up with my grandma and grandpa. Things changed very quickly at the university as a result. We need to make sure that the person teaching any tribal course has the resources from the tribal communities.





## Language Clan

The language clan was uniquely challenged in the project. There are 11 Native languages in Wisconsin. Six languages are from Ojibwe or Chippewa bands with their own dialects. Developing a course and assessment for such diversity of languages was no easy task.

...

**“Language is so complex, the etymology, the dialects and nuances to understand what a word means. Lac du Flambeau, for example, has a town dialect and the old village dialect, based on where you live.”**

- *Brandon Thoms*

The clan realized that there was not just one way to approach this course, as students would come to language proficiency in different ways.

...

**“Consider the example of a student learning Ojibwe from K-8th grade, then going to an off-reservation school and receiving no instruction in high school. This student may be fluent in the language, but they have no sense of how the grammar works. Compare this student to someone who is not fluent in the language but understands the grammar.”**

- *Muqsahkwat Corn*

The clan consisted of experts in the Oneida, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi languages. They knew they had to design the course and assessment to be used with any language, which required creative thinking.

...

**“Our language experts/clan members have an amazing way of teaching language. Each expert does it differently. One member would take students on a tour of the reservation and ask them to tell him about things by speaking in the language. Another member would have a meal with students and ask them to speak conversationally in the language as one would during a meal.”**

- *Elizabeth DeVore, language clan member*

The clan had to balance the tension of honoring the Indigenous approach to language with the requirements of the college. For Native people, language and culture are inextricably connected; separating them into different courses could feel inauthentic. However, the college needed to have language as a free-standing course in order to grant credit to learners. One of the clan members, Leanne Vigue, was the registrar at Nicolet College and connected to the Menominee tribe. She was raising her children in the culture and taking them to language lessons. As such, she was well positioned to translate their work into a framework for the college.

...

**“Leanne had an incredible understanding of what was needed. She did a lot of the work of writing the curriculum. As the registrar, she also knew the accreditation requirements.”**

- *Elizabeth DeVore*





The clan settled on a course and assessment that could pertain to any Indigenous language. It would require an assessor of the given language to be found and a course quickly modified or aligned to the language and the methods of the instructor.

...

**“The consensus that we strived to gain was difficult and took a lot of work, but was valuable.”**

- *Muqsahkwat Corn*

## LANGUAGE CONTEXT AS SHARED BY MUQSAHKWAT CORN

The profound sense of identity that is attached to language is undeniable. In the early days of the Federal Indian boarding schools, which started in Wisconsin in 1867, they hadn't completely outlawed the use of the language. In 1882, the No Indian Language policy at boarding schools was established. That was closely followed by the Ghost Dance incident in Lakota country, which resulted in a ban on our religion, which closely correlates with language. Through these, we experienced a huge deprivation of our language and spirituality, which was not lawfully overturned until the Religious Freedom Act in 1978.

Federal Indian boarding schools ran for a minimum of three generations in most communities to break the natural progression of language, culture, and history. In our area, the boarding schools ended around the 1940s or 1950s. During these 80 or so years, we were treated very harshly, were in a bad way, and learned to internalize that. How could we come through this boarding school experience and not have serious traumas?

When my generation came to understand all of this, we wanted to reclaim our identity. I started learning bits of the Menominee language in Headstart at the preschool level and then through early elementary school. When I was in 2nd grade, my family moved away from our reservation, and I stopped receiving language instruction. My dad was not a first language speaker, and I never heard my grandparents speaking the language (as the traumas inflicted by efforts to eradicate language in the boarding schools caused many Native speakers to stop using their language). That year, when I was just seven years old, I started having dreams of people speaking the language. It would scare me as I didn't understand it, but my dad said it was good.

When I was about nine, a local university hired an elder to teach our language at the university. When he would come to teach, he would stop by my house to sit and talk. He would tell me a word or two. I would try to use it. It got to the point where he was teaching my brother and me. I got good at it, and he was kind to me. I struggled in school, so it was very encouraging to hear that I was good at language. I moved back to the reservation at age 12. A fluent-speaking elder taught us language in





school, though he left when I was in junior high and was replaced by another teacher who did not speak the language. By that time, I was able to speak the language. I later got a job at the casino where I met a white guy who knew the language. We would meet and practice it.

At age 20, I was hired by the tribe through a grant to do language studies. I was brought on first as a trainee and then became a research assistant. I was hired by the school district for several years, did self-contracting at University of Wisconsin Green Bay and College of Menominee Nation, and then helped cofound the non-profit, **Menomini yoU**, which aims to revitalize and renormalize the Menomini language and lifeways. Language is like the DNA of an ethnicity. I wanted to reclaim that.

Our language is still not revitalized. The last people we know who were speaking the language were born in the 1920s and 1930s. By the 1940s, nobody was being raised with the language. During Civil Rights and the American Indian Movement in the 1960s and 1970s, people became proud of themselves and started to fight back. Those were the Red Power Days. In the 1970s, language came to the forefront. We realized that if we could keep our language, we would remember who we are. When I came along, people were trying to do this.

Our languages track the unique journey of our tribe's history. As you begin to learn and decode language, you become more aware of your tribe's story, in my case, the Menominee story. I was in Hawaii at a language conference and heard a great story about language. Hawaiians are at the forefront of language revitalization and have been at it much longer than us on the mainland. They had in their culture a story of freshwater fish-raising. They had forgotten how to do this type of fish-raising, but they knew the word for it. They had been speaking the language for 30 years before they were able to break down the word by multiple syllables. When they decoded the word at that level, they discovered that baked right into the word was the correct meaning and process for how to do this type of fish-raising. It gave them the ability to bring back this historical practice. When you can break down the language at this level, your history is in it.

I'm glad to be born at a time when there was still person-to-person transmission of language. Without that context, you may just take written history for what it is. In 1867, we were targeted for destruction, and they proceeded to destroy us for many years. What sort of resilience do people have that they could preserve the language? One of my elders said to me before they died, "Maybe someday when you are an old man, you will hear these children speaking the language. Don't give up." I think of a chief on a video recording who said, "I was born Indian, all Indian." It's simple, but that's what I'm fighting for, when our kids can say that.







# Faculty and Staff Professional Development

Training for Nicolet faculty and staff on Indigenous ways was part of the plan for the project. After the first gathering, the project team realized the need to quickly launch the training in order to prepare faculty and staff to properly interact with Native members, especially elders.

...

“One of our tribal leaders spoke for an hour at the convening. In our ways, you never interrupt an elder. You let them finish speaking. After that, Susie said we should have a cultural training with faculty and staff so they would have an understanding. It was a crash course in Native 101.”

- *Brandon Thoms*

## CREATION

The project team started to identify topics to cover about Native people, history, cultures, and communities. The first session focused on helping faculty and staff understand Indigenous cultural norms, expectations, and communication styles.

...

“We knew the best way to learn is to talk with someone, meet with them, ask questions, and allow the person time to speak.”

- *Brandon Thoms*

Training sessions were also about creating a platform for Native voices. Speakers ranged from local tribal members and project participants to experts from Canada and leaders of Indigenous organizations. Speakers included highly regarded Native figures, such as Oren Lyons, member of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Betty Jack, who helped advocate for and inform the Indian Child Welfare Act, James Vukelich, known for Ojibwe language revitalization, and others. Topics covered everything from state-specific issues and history to engaging Native students and teaching culturally to advocacy, art, and cultural appropriation. A total of 13 sessions were offered between May 2020 and August 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of sessions were held virtually. (See **Appendix A** for the full list of sessions and descriptions.)



## ENGAGEMENT

Initially, training sessions were intended primarily for project participants. However, the first two sessions were so impactful that the project team realized the larger Nicolet College community needed to be a part of this important learning and experience.

...

**“Laura saw that there would be a significant benefit if we invited a broader swath of people to participate. This included faculty from across transfer and liberal arts programs and student-facing staff, such as the Registrar’s Office and Financial Aid, and even Board of Trustee members.”**

*- Kate Ferrel*

What started as a group of about 10-20 participants in the first session soon grew to an average of 40 participants from across the college and a high of 60 faculty, staff, and administrators.

## RESPONSE

The experience in these sessions challenged faculty and staff in new ways. The breadth of topics and perspectives dramatically increased awareness and understanding, spurring reflection and deeper discussion.

...

**“I heard conversations about these sessions everywhere - in the breakroom, in the bathroom, at the executive leadership table - days and weeks after they occurred. People were deeply reflecting on their own biases and beliefs.”**

*- Kate Ferrel*

The sessions' content had implications for the community at both personal and professional levels. For IWOK participants, sessions were particularly relevant and applicable.

...

**“The professional development series allowed the project to operate at the level it was intended to operate. It helped round out our understanding of the subject matter and deepen or fill in those unfamiliar areas.”**

*- Patrick Burns*

...

**“You can’t be a part of the project without knowing these issues - boarding schools, government, interactions, teaching, and how to incorporate them into a general pedagogy. It was a pretty diverse array of topics.”**

*- Tom Wilding*

Faculty and staff provided feedback on the series through a survey given at the end of the project. The survey results showed:

- Broad and diverse participation across the institution
- Good engagement across multiple training sessions
- A high valuing of the training sessions at both professional and personal levels
- Application of learning to courses and daily interactions

Individuals shared their experience, how they incorporated what they had learned, and specific suggestions for how the work should continue. (See **Appendix B** for more survey results, detailed feedback on the experience, and suggestions for next steps.)

## **NATIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: AS SHARED BY ELIZABETH DEVORE, ENGLISH INSTRUCTOR**

I came to Wisconsin after graduate school. During my job interview with Nicolet College, the hiring committee mentioned aspirations to interact more with the three area tribal communities. When the college began taking the Native American Tribal Management program to the Lac du Flambeau community, I was asked to join them and teach English.

I was completely unprepared to be in a Native community. Looking back, I'm embarrassed that I didn't do any cultural preparation. My students took pity on me, though, and helped me start learning how to conduct myself in a culturally appropriate manner. It was very obvious from the beginning that I was a guest, stepping into a sovereign nation. Students would say when I was trying to find my way in the culture, "It's okay. We know you are white. We are happy you are here and trying to learn about our culture."

It was a very different dynamic from teaching on campus. In one course, a student had missed several class sessions. Some of the other students came up to me and let me know that the student was struggling with a life issue. They were all aware of the issue and asked me not to call the student out on it publicly. I had never before experienced students advocating and watching out for each other in this way. It made me see that this was much more of a "collectivist culture" than I had ever been in before. It was an amazing learning experience for me.

My classes were held inside a casino. I always started the class with journaling or other sharing activities that allow for a gentle start that is easy to jump into, as students may arrive at different times. This teaching practice recognizes culturally different senses of time. Plus, students were employees at the casino and couldn't always easily break away from work. I didn't want them to come into class and feel late. I would also spend time before class eating breakfast with students, which the casino provided, as relationships are the most important thing.

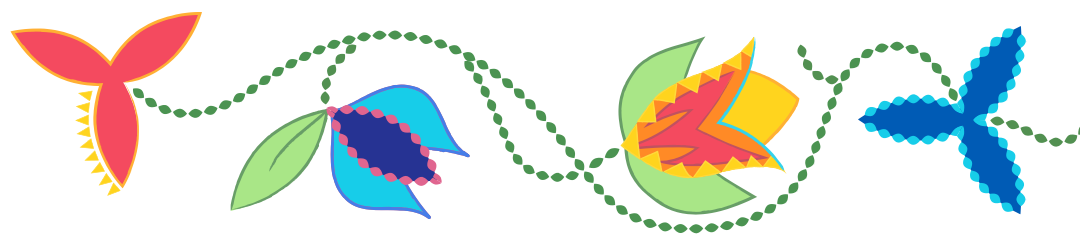


Every class we offer in Indigenous communities is a relationship. The relationship must come first. Students always ask who the instructor will be before they sign up for a new course. They want to know that it will be a safe space and that the instructor will come with an understanding of Indigenous people. The college's administrators also need to establish working relationships with tribal governments. Tribal leaders represent and support their members' educational and professional goals. The big picture parts of our partnerships are created through leaders-to-leaders relationships.

I'm a big proponent that we shouldn't send faculty or anyone from the college to Indigenous communities without some cultural competency training. I've had colleagues ask me what they need to know in order to teach in tribal communities, but that is not how it works. Cultural competence requires an ongoing, sincere investment of time and heart. Also, Indigenous culture is not something a white person should be teaching another white person. Indigenous students tell me that the best way to learn about their communities is to show up and show interest and to form sincere working relationships with Indigenous people.

Several summers ago, I had an online class with some students from Mole Lake. One of the students was the **Tribal Historic Preservation Officer** (THPO). I was invited by the student to join him and members of multiple tribes in a training on how to take oral histories. After that experience, I was invited to train on an archaeological excavation site in Lac du Flambeau for a whole week. There was always an elder present, sometimes starting the day's work by smudging with traditional sage. At lunch, elders would give further teachings, tell stories, speak in Indigenous languages, and offer prayers. I often did not know how to behave within the cultural traditions or what was appropriate for me as an outsider. I wanted to show respect, and sometimes that means having to go forward in cultural events even if I was not sure I was going to do it right. I have often stumbled, made mistakes, and been clumsy in my attempts to learn, but I have always been supported by my friends and students in Indigenous communities.

I learned a lot. I was embarrassed by my own ignorance a lot. I had to be willing to unbend my ego to reach a level of cultural competency and to foster meaningful relationships. I am still learning and am thankful for my many Indigenous teachers, including students, colleagues, elders, neighbors, and friends.





## Challenges

The structure and experience of the four clans and the faculty and staff development series were very effective. However, as the project moved forward, some hurdles did emerge. The most significant were the COVID-19 pandemic and time.

### COVID-19 PANDEMIC

IWOK received grant funding from Lumina Foundation in fall 2019 to launch the project. The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting shutdowns, starting in March 2020 and running through much of 2021, caused a major disruption to the project. Indigenous members were not used to engaging virtually, internet access was spotty in rural parts of the state, and traditional spiritual practices were not supposed to be recorded or conducted by video.

...

**“For Indian people, being on Zoom is really difficult. I would rather be sitting in the room talking with you. It was a struggle. Internet connections didn’t always work well.”**

- *Uncle Ernie St. Germaine*

...

**“It was really hard to do group brainstorming on Zoom. I had really appreciated being able to get together and meet in the way that the grant was intended. I had respected leaders who would open the meeting with tobacco and prayer and inspiring thoughts. Those were hard to capture on Zoom. It made me feel distant from the work.”**

- *Muqsahkwat Corn*

Over time, participants got used to meeting virtually and figured out how to perform traditional and spiritual practices in appropriate ways online.

...

**“We had to figure out how to be on camera and do these spiritual practices. We agreed we would each do it off camera. We always had an elder give the prayer.”**

- *Susie Crazy Thunder*

Another effect of COVID-19 was the inability to meet directly with tribal governments to seek their input and support of the project. Many tribes closed operations to the public and limited interaction with outside organizations and the general public during the pandemic. The initial plans included visiting each tribe in person to gain their formal support and involvement, as the tribes were to be the ultimate PLA assessors.

Even though the pandemic had a significant impact on the project, there were a few unexpected positive results, such as increased access and engagement. The Nicolet College district is spread out over 4,000 square miles, meaning coming together in person can require anywhere between 1-4 hours of travel. Meeting virtually eliminated this barrier.



...

“One of the high-level takeaways is that Indian country can still work virtually. I was able to attend virtual meetings in a place where I could sit and look outside and see the snow, the green grass, the wildlife, and watch the seasons change. That felt really good to me.”

- Paul Ninham

...

“In the midst of the pandemic, having the virtual platform for the faculty and staff professional development series probably really extended the reach beyond what we would have otherwise.”

- Laura Wind-Norton

## TIME

Time was another hurdle. The delays and switch to virtual meetings during the pandemic may have impacted the clans' ability to accomplish all they had hoped to achieve. Further, the project was always meant to be a two-and-a-half year timeline, which in the end, may not have been sufficient for the project.

...

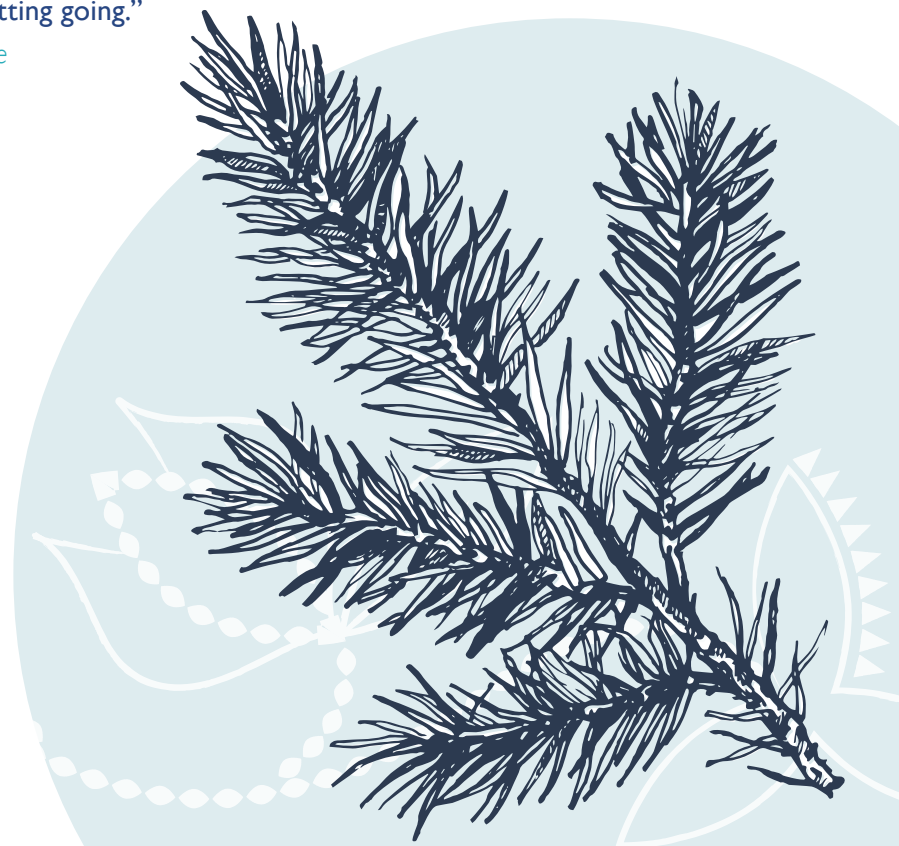
“I feel we could have used another year if we were really going to have it be what we wanted it to be. We did a lot of good work. It was very valuable. We got the competencies done, but we needed more time.”

- Brandon Thoms

...

“We were just really getting going.”

- Uncle Ernie St. Germaine





# Chapter 4

## Outcomes and Insights



## Outcomes

By the end of the All Learning Counts grant in 2021, IWOK was able to achieve some of its key goals, bring participants back together, and lay a foundation for sustainability in the work.

### CURRICULUM AND PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENTS

Each of the four clans arrived at a framework to assess prior ways of knowing and a guide to develop a course in their topic area. The four courses, once fully developed, will lead to an Indigenous Ways of Knowing certificate, which will count for 13 credits towards an associate of arts or associate of science degree. (See **Appendix C** for course listings.)

The initial hope was to launch some of the courses by spring 2023, though timelines may get pushed back in an effort to ensure quality. In the meantime, the college has experienced an enrollment increase in its Tribal Management program due to awareness generated through the IWOK project. More than 20 new students enrolled, with courses running in two tribal communities.

### DAY OF EDUCATION AND CELEBRATION POW-WOW

Knowing that so much of the project had been spent in virtual gatherings, the project team decided to bring all participants and communities together for a day of education and a celebration of sovereignty pow-wow. The events were held across two days, Nov 19-20, 2021, at the new Potawatomi community center. There were speeches by Native elders, members of IWOK, and Nicolet College leaders and members about the work and outcomes of the project, aimed at honoring and acknowledging the contributions. Community members valued the opportunity to come together in person, share their progress with the broader community, and celebrate what had been achieved. (See **Appendix D** for event listings.)

...

**“I went to the Day of Education and got to hear some speakers articulate in powerful ways what tribal pedagogy looks like and why it is so fundamentally important to people and meaning making for students. I was happy, amazed, and deeply gratified by the direction it was going and what it was doing.”**

- *Dianne Lazear*

### FACULTY HIRE

In an effort to ensure the sustainability of IWOK, the college funded and established a permanent, full-time Indigenous Studies and Tribal Business Management instructor position to support this program and the existing Tribal Business Management program. The college hired a Native American instructor to fill the position with the hope that they could lead the college forward with needed next steps for IWOK. The college also plans to bring on Native adjunct instructors to provide additional instruction in courses and be representative of Native learners.



## Ripple Effects

Beyond the immediate outcomes of the project, Nicolet College has experienced several positive ripple effects, namely a grassroots effort to continue learning, the formalization of the professional development series for other Nicolet College members, and an early collaboration in a Native art course on campus.

### IWOK CO-LAB

In summer 2022, a grassroots initiative arose among Nicolet College faculty and staff to continue the learning that began in the professional development series. The IWOK Co-Lab launched in fall 2022 to all faculty and staff. Over 30 people attended early sessions. Meetings begin with a check-in, and sessions have focused on prioritizing Native voices, being a safe space to explore issues, and figuring out how to translate learning into teaching and practice.

...

**“The speakers in the IWOK series would always say that we are responsible for carrying this forward and learning more.”**

- Elizabeth DeVore

### ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In fall 2022, the college made recorded sessions from the IWOK professional development series available to all members of the Nicolet College employee community. The plan is to enable college faculty, staff, and administrators in the near future to earn a certificate by completing this series, which has been formatted as a self-directed course in the college's learning management system. The training will require faculty and staff to reflect on their learning and document how they will implement what they've learned in their courses and/or daily engagement across campus.

### NATIVE ART COURSE

While the IWOK courses have not yet formally launched, Uncle Ernie St. Germaine worked with a Nicolet art instructor and instructional designer to redesign the college's Native American Art course, move it online, and bring Native knowledge and culture to the forefront of the course. Uncle Ernie connected students to Native artists all over the country for their projects. In December 2022, the course won the **WCET Outstanding Work award** from the Western State Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) for its innovative design.

## Insights

Moving through IWOK has illuminated several insights related to Indigenous pedagogy and expertise, faculty and staff training, and the relationships that were developed through the project.

### INDIGENOUS PEDAGOGY AND EXPERTISE

All non-Native participants experienced immersion in Indigenous pedagogy and could see firsthand the value and relevance of applying this approach to the courses and work going forward. The extent of expertise from within the tribes and across the state has also become clearer, helping the college see the depth of resources that they and the tribes can draw from in staffing and shaping courses and assessments.

...

**“This was one of the most culturally intact and coherent projects I’ve ever seen. They used the pedagogy they wanted to use it with students.”**

- *Dianne Lazear*

...

**“The biggest success was that so many people now understand that there are many Indigenous experts across Wisconsin. They are our neighbors and now hopefully our friends, and we can partner. Before IWOK, that awareness was not there.”**

- *Elizabeth DeVore*

### FACULTY AND STAFF TRAINING

The faculty and staff professional development flipped the dominant paradigm that those who work with postsecondary institutions have to acclimate to the institution’s ways. Instead, the college’s faculty and staff had to acclimate to Native ways of being and doing. They had to learn how to listen, understand, appreciate, and engage with their Indigenous counterparts.

...

**“This experience was enlightening. I’ve learned a tremendous amount, but there is so much more to learn. It opens other doors and results in more questions, where you begin to recognize the depth of your ignorance.”**

- *Tom Wilding*



## RELATIONSHIPS

The level of collaboration for the project was not merely transactional. The trust required to move forward together and the time spent doing check-ins, working towards consensus, and seeking to understand each other was transformational, as one member, Bawaajigekwe, noted.

...

“I miss everybody. I miss the work. Gathering as Indigenous people and inviting non-Indigenous people into our sacred space, having those good discussions, and checking in was a real positive for me.”

- Paul Ninham

...

“Those relationships, I’ll remember them all my life. Now that the faculty have those relationships, we can reach out to tribal members and continue to build on our knowledge and to better serve our Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.”

- Elizabeth DeVore





# Chapter 5

## Going Forward



# Vision for the Future

When asked what their greatest hopes are for IWOK, those interviewed shared aspirations that can serve as a three-part vision for the work going forward, including serving as a bridge from K-12 education to university, a springboard for individuals, and a signature model for Indigenous curriculum.

## BRIDGE FROM K-12 EDUCATION TO UNIVERSITY

The original vision for the project to serve as a bridge between Indigenous education at the K-12 level to the university level remains the same. Achieving this requires building out the full IWOK curriculum as part of an associate degree program and attending to the connection points at both ends of the bridge. Such efforts will entail creating awareness, fostering relationships, and solidifying agreements.

- 1. Outreach and Marketing:** On the K-12 side, awareness and relationships may take the form of outreach and marketing. The tribes and college can work together to develop marketing materials and conduct outreach across area schools, both those on and off tribal lands, to help make the program broadly known. The tribes and the college can also build relationships with educational representatives to ensure that those leading Indigenous education know about and can promote IWOK.

...

“It is important to make sure that people know that the opportunity exists and to message it appropriately. Target schools with Native children. Get a list of those who are certified to teach language, culture, and history through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Ask them to get the word out to their students.”

- *Muqsahkwat Corn*

- 2. Dual Credit:** Outreach and marketing efforts may focus on encouraging students to continue on to a postsecondary education, but it could also be an opportunity to focus on built-in pathways through dual credit.

...

“I would like to see this align with our dual credit process and course offerings that we do with the high schools and put this in a dual credit format. Our schools are doing this work already and it aligns with them. It would be so empowering to them.”

- *Susie Crazy Thunder*

- 3. Transfer:** On the university side, the college can work with the UW system and other institutions to ensure that the program is transferable to bachelor's degree-granting institutions and can count towards language requirements, general education requirements, or electives.

...

“The ultimate goal is to have IWOK credits transfer to other institutions and have Indigenous knowledge valued in a way that we value other cultures and languages.”

- *Tom Wilding*



## SPRINGBOARD FOR INDIVIDUALS

In the same way that the governance clan designed their curriculum for those who would step into tribal governance roles, IWOK as a whole can serve as preparation for future leaders. However, a first step is to focus on empowering individuals.

- 1. Access and Empowerment:** As individuals see their experience recognized and their knowledge honored, they begin to see a place for themselves and a way to connect two worlds. It can open doors and offer new paths and opportunities.

...

“A person’s ideas about themselves as an individual are important. If you can establish that, then their motivation for education skyrockets.”

- *Sonny Smart*

...

“I never considered going to postsecondary education. Unfortunately, that has kept a wall up on a lot of opportunities. Hopefully through this work, people will start to see that there isn’t this wall and there isn’t just one set of education. Maybe someone like me could maybe go to school and see that there isn’t one skill set.”

- *Muqsahkwat Corn*

- 2. Future Leaders:** At the tribal level, individuals can build on their knowledge to be better positioned to serve and represent their communities in a multitude of ways.

## SIGNATURE MODEL FOR INDIGENOUS CURRICULUM

The content created and methods applied can become a model for developing Indigenous curriculum. Doing so will necessitate a rigorous focus on serving Native learners, creating safe spaces, and considering how curriculum serves both local learners and perhaps others across the region and state.

- 1. Native Learners:** The program must be designed to help Native learners succeed, including infusing holistic supports to enable students to thrive.

...

“We need to build courses around the students. There is no point in having a course that is not salient, relevant, and useful to its students.”

- *Jon Greendeer*

- 2. Safe Spaces:** The college will need to intentionally attend to its culture to make its campus, classrooms, and services a safe and welcoming environment for Indigenous students.

...

“There is still much to be done. Maybe there is a pocket of safety. But that is not good enough.”

- *Bawaajigekwe Boulley*



...

“This project forces Nicolet to look at who they are to all students. It is good for everyone and sets the foundation for expanding their efforts to better serve other marginalized groups at the same time.”

- *Sonny Smart*

**3. Curricular Reach:** The IWOK model can serve learners at the local level but perhaps also more broadly.

...

“I don’t think the campus could look to its left and right and see another campus who has developed a culturally rigorous curriculum. They’ve done the work and a lot of lifting for other campuses. They’ve made their share of mistakes, which contributes to their success.”

- *Jon Greendeer*



## Achieving Next Steps

Indigenous Ways of Knowing is a unique project that, in many ways, is just beginning. Although the original grant has ended, much more is needed to achieve its full potential and the original vision for the project.

Grant funding enabled the project to be fully intentional and collaborative, to take the approach that was needed, and, most importantly, to be Native-led by tribal elders and members. The outcomes of the project and the initial ripple effects are promising, yet everyone agrees that this work must continue and that more is needed. The collective wish is for the project to achieve its greatest potential, but taking the work to the next level and pursuing sustainability will not be easy. It will require a blend of dogged determination, openness, and creativity to chart a new way of being in a system that is not designed to support it.

...

**“There’s a lot more that can and should be done. We have to be authentic to the spirit of the project. We have to figure out how to bring these two worlds together.”**

*- Laura Wind-Norton*

## IMPLEMENTATION

IWOK developed structures to honor a new way of knowing. Implementing those new structures will require adhering to the original intent of the project and closely attuning to where further consideration, adaptation, or experimentation is needed. Implementation is about figuring out the logistics of how to make IWOK work.

The implementation phase will consist of the following steps:

- **Assessments:** Test and refine assessments.
- **Guides:** Develop a guide for assessors and for students preparing to be assessed.
- **Recruitment:** Create and launch a marketing and recruitment strategy.
- **Supports:** Provide holistic and sustained advising and support for students.
- **Launch:** Open the assessments and courses to students.
- **Adapt:** Plan to quickly pivot and adapt.

...

**“When applied, if it doesn’t seem to work, we should figure out how to make it work better.”**

*- Muqsahkwat Corn*



## ONGOING COLLABORATION

The grant created space for the project to be what it needed to be. In the absence of that space, the college and sovereign nations must navigate next steps in a postsecondary system designed to support and facilitate Western ways of being. Doing this well will require ongoing collaboration and willingness to challenge systems, structures, policies, regulations, and processes in a way that maintains authenticity of approach and a deep partnership.

This can take different forms, such as:

- **Formalized partnerships with the tribes:** The tribes and college can jointly agree on what good partnership looks like going forward, how to work together, stay in communication, and make decisions together. The initial vision for the project called for tribes serving as the assessors for PLA and instructors for courses.
- **Steering committee:** Achieving the full vision of IWOK will require forging new paths, not just in curriculum and assessment, but in operations and student services as well. A steering committee consisting of tribal representatives and perhaps institutional and/or outside representatives can help the college navigate efforts going forward. Such a body could function as a source of expertise, support, and oversight and would need to be sufficiently empowered to enable necessary changes.
- **Coordinators and liaisons:** Individuals may need to be charged with guiding the work forward in a way that honors the collaborative process and ensures progress. An IWOK coordinator or workgroup could manage the logistics for the college and work with liaisons from the tribes to coordinate each step.

## AVOIDING APPROPRIATION

Ongoing rigorous collaboration that is Native-led by local tribes is essential, yet as noted above, will require intentionality, openness to new ways, and a willingness to challenge existing structures. While postsecondary education is well-positioned for this type of collaboration, it also runs a greater risk due to power structures inherent in its systems, as one university professor in *Elements of Indigenous Style* (2018) notes:

“The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *collaboration* in two ways: 1.) The action of working with someone to produce something; and 2.) Traitorous cooperation with an enemy.’ Both senses of the word are true and important to bear in mind. Collaboration, in the sense of working together with others to produce projects, is one way to counter the history of representing Indigenous People by non-Indigenous authors, who often did not consult with or seek consent from the communities they studied. Collaborations often require years to complete, and universities can provide a ‘home’ during long periods of gestation and production. Universities’ granting agencies, libraries, archives, and space for meeting can facilitate work for independent artists who require adequate recompense for their work. However, those very same institutional structures perpetuate power relationships that shape the interactions between collaborators. One voice can become dominant. What begins as collaboration can, in the worst case scenario, devolve into appropriation.” (*Elements of Indigenous Style*, 2018, p.32)

Acknowledging the potential of a power imbalance due to higher education’s structures can help all partners remain attuned to this risk and intentional to avoid it and all that goes with it. This will be necessary to ensure the project’s long-term success.



## FUNDING AND PRIORITIZATION

Next steps with IWOK will require an investment of resources, including time, funding, and the support of both college and tribal leadership. If IWOK in 2019-2021 was the planning phase, the next phase is the startup. Additional funds will be needed to pilot assessments and courses, develop new systems, manage partnerships, and ensure proper support and representation.

Additional funding could be sought through the following ways:

- **External grants:** The college and tribes can individually and/or jointly seek local, state, and national funding opportunities. A grant writer may be needed to identify, pursue, and coordinate such opportunities.
- **Internal resources:** While the college has already allocated funds for an IWOK faculty position, the role is currently designed to manage both IWOK and the Tribal Management program. Additional staffing and/or reallocation of resources from other departments may be needed over a set time to further develop and implement the program.
- **A business model:** In the absence of full and sustained funding, a business model is needed to enable the program to become self-sustaining over time. Doing so will require a creative approach that may allow the program to function outside of traditional structures. Perhaps it will entail having pathways be employer-supported and funded. It could include beginning courses on the non-credit/workforce programs and creating articulation agreements to enable courses to automatically and seamlessly count for credit towards a degree, while being launched and led in the part of the college that allows for greater flexibility.

...

**“We will need continued institutional commitment to operationalize this. We will likely need to invest in more faculty and coaches to serve these students.”**

- *Kate Ferrel*

## NATIVE REPRESENTATION

Implementation that is steeped in Native representation will be critical to the success of the program. Representation must be both in and outside of the classroom in the form of Native instructors, advisors, and coordinators. Now that the college is aware of the expertise that exists, it is incumbent on them to find ways to engage Native partners, even if it requires forging new paths or exploring non-traditional means to achieve it. Hiring Native staff and instructors will also need to occur in close coordination with the tribes, as only the tribes can verify Native status.

...

**“There are a lot of tribal and former tribal leaders who would jump at the chance to be in the classroom as adjuncts to share their passion, knowledge, and stories. I would like to see this.”**

- *Paul Ninham*

...

**“Having courses taught by Native people is critical. We need Native people in the classroom - both in and outside of the tribal courses.”**

- *Dianne Lazear*

## Closing

Indigenous Ways of Knowing was something special. It was Native-led, based on deep collaboration between the tribes and college, and the college faculty and staff came to it with openness and eagerness to learn. The work established an important foundation and way of being that can and must inform next steps. Ongoing development and momentum are critical to achieve the project's full potential, while intentionality is imperative to ensure each step forward is taken in such a way as to not veer from the collective approach of the work to date, lest the college runs the risk of not faithfully honoring the original intention of the work.

The prospect of what can be accomplished cannot be overstated. To illustrate, one of the speakers in the professional development series shared how he first encountered the Ojibwe language by chance through a course at a technical college in Minnesota, which he took simply to be eligible for financial aid. This one encounter would end up putting him on a lifelong path of Native language revitalization. Similarly, each learner the program touches may be affected in untold ways. IWOK can empower individuals, strengthen communities, and bring broader recognition and deeper honoring of Indigenous Ways of Knowing to the region, state, and country.

...

“Imagine having this program with just 10 tribal members coming in and feeling actually capable, like, ‘I can earn this credential, but it doesn’t validate me as a person, rather I validate it.’ There’s reciprocity in it. That is 10 people, 10 families, and 10 communities they are stationed in. There is a huge ripple effect - something that could have an impact far beyond this lifetime.”

- *Bawaajigekwe Bouley*

...

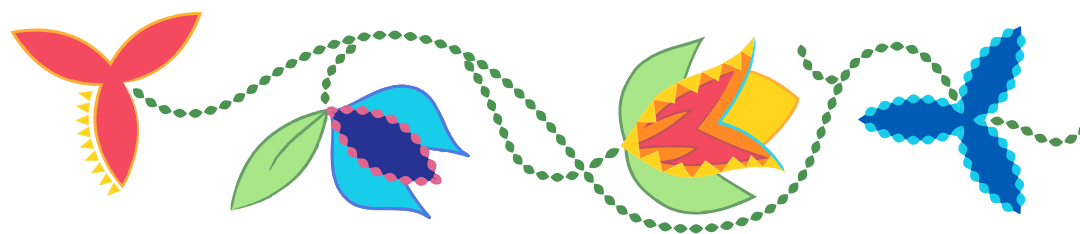
“We have not even begun to unleash the power and energy that this curriculum can produce to advance relationships with tribal partners and help these learners achieve their postsecondary goals.”

- *Kate Ferrel*

...

“I felt like, wow, if this group could stay together and keep doing this, the resource we could be - not just for Nicolet, but tribal colleges around the country and UW institutions! It is unimaginable the things that could be done.”

- *Uncle Ernie St. Germaine*



# Appendix A

## IWOK Professional Development Series

**American Indian Ways of Being** Brandon Thoms, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, and Susie Crazy Thunder, Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, provide insight on understanding and recognizing cultural norms, expectations, and communication styles of American Indians. This sharing session will help prepare us for our work with both the WIEA Work Group and the Many Ways of Knowing Project.

**Native Activism** Ms. Betty Jack, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, shares her own journey in Native activism and social justice working in Indian country.

**Native Social and Political Advocacy** Ms. Betty Jack, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, talks about continuing efforts to address and combat the destruction of American Indian families through social and political advocacy.

**Native Organizations in Wisconsin** Brandon Thoms, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, and Susie Crazy Thunder, Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, take a deeper look at Native organizations and the resources they offer to both Native and non-Native clientele.

**Many Ways of Knowing: Keynote with Oren Lyons** Join the Many Ways of Knowing Tribal Expert Work Group Convening Seven Keynote Address with Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper of the Wolf Clan, Seneca Nation, of the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Oren shares Native perspectives on history and acclimating western academia to Indigenous People.

**Teaching Culturally (as Opposed to Teaching Culture)** Ricky White, Whitefish Bay First Nations Ontario, Canada, talks about understanding Native students and helps provide strategies for connecting with Native learners.

**Cultural Appropriation: More Than Hurt Feelings** Serene Zhaamengwa Lawrence, Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, provides a deep look into cultural appropriation and its far-reaching impacts on Native people and their communities.

**Best Practices for Reaching Native Students** Ricky White, Whitefish Bay First Nations Ontario, Canada, shares culturally congruent strategies and methods for engaging Native learners.

**“Artivism” & Emulating John Trudell** Phillip Meshekey, Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians, walks us through contemporary Indigenous activism and social justice through Native art and culture.

**The Seven Generations and the Seven Grandfather Teachings** James Vukelich, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, presents the traditional teachings of the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe/Chippewa) as a means of developing interconnectedness and interdependence. The seven grandfather teachings, the sacred law of the Anishinaabeg, show us how to lead Mino-bimaadiziwin “the good life,” a life of without contradiction or conflict, a life of peace and balance.

**Rehumanizing 21st Century Mathematics Classrooms** Running Horse Livingston, Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and owner/operator Mathematize Inc. This workshop will focus on strategies designed to accommodate the needs of all students through an Indigenous lens. A humanistic pedagogy is one founded in context, communication, and community. These instructional goals are well-researched as “best practice” but largely absent in college classrooms.

**Missing, Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW)** Ms. Taylor Owens, founder of the non-profit organization, Red Voice, will share her story about the MMIW movement and provide a path to understanding the trauma and peril that is reality for Indigenous women/peoples.

**Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC): Tribal Natural Resource Management**

Mic Isham, Executive Director, GLIFWC, Formed in 1984, GLIFWC represents eleven Ojibwe tribes in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan who reserved hunting, fishing, and gathering rights in the 1837, 1842, and 1854 Treaties with the United States government. The organization provides natural resource management expertise, conservation enforcement, legal and policy analysis, and public information services in support of the exercise of treaty rights during well-regulated, off-reservation seasons throughout the treaty-ceded territories.

# Appendix B

## Survey Results of Faculty and Staff Training

At the end of the project, the college sent out a survey to all who attended the trainings, to which nearly everyone, at 93%, responded.

### Survey Participants

Those who responded to the survey revealed the broad and diverse inclusion of those from across the college.

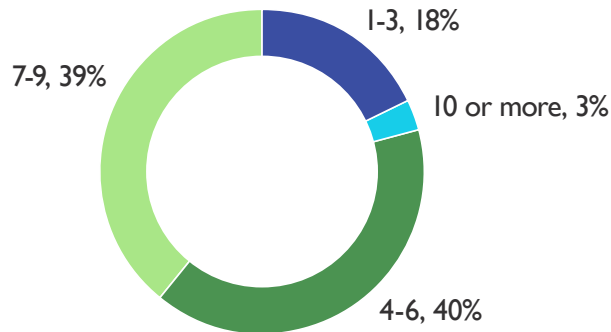
- 29% faculty
- 21% administration
- 13% student support
- 11% academic support staff
- 11% business & operations
- 3% adjunct faculty
- 13% other functional areas

The majority of those who participated in the trainings, at 95%, were not directly involved in IWOK.

### Session Attendance

Most participants attended four or more sessions.

**How many Many Ways of Knowing sessions did you attend or watch?**



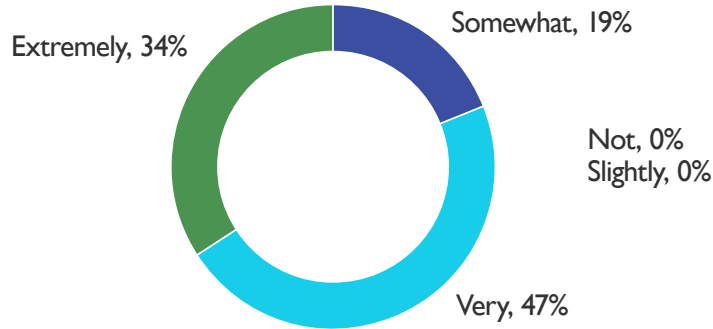
### Prior Knowledge

Nearly all (92%) had some prior knowledge of Indigenous culture, though only 29% had a fair or large amount of knowledge. In order of least to most, 8% had no prior knowledge, 24% had little prior knowledge, 39% had some prior knowledge, 21% had a fair amount, and 8% had a large amount.

### Professional Value of Sessions

Most (81%) found the sessions very (47%) or extremely (34%) valuable to their professional development. No participants found the session not valuable or slightly valuable.

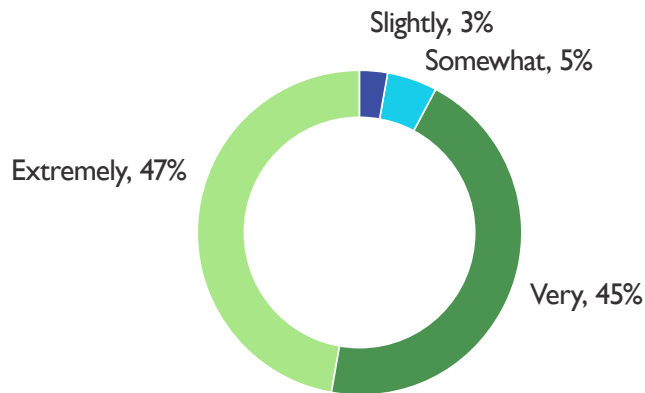
**How valuable did you find the sessions in regards to your professional development?**



### Personal Value

Nearly all (92%) found sessions very valuable (45%) or extremely valuable (47%) to their personal development. No participants found it not valuable.

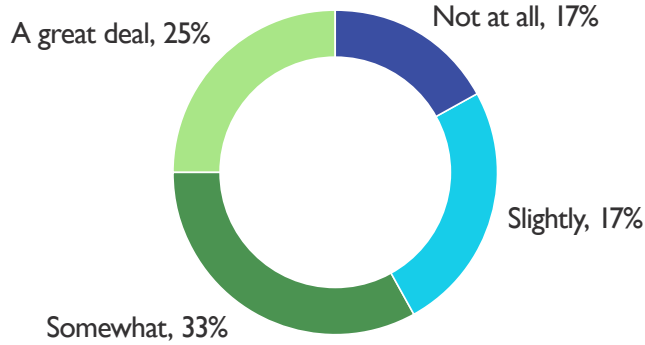
**How valuable did you find them in regards to your personal development?**



**Application of Learning: Faculty and Adjuncts**

Most responded that they've been able to implement ideas from sessions a great deal (25%) or somewhat (33%), while 17% said not at all. No faculty responded that they've implemented ideas on a daily basis.

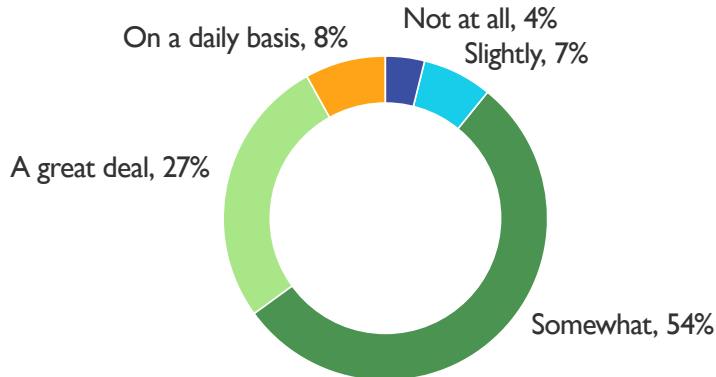
**To what extent have you been able to implement ideas from the sessions in your courses?**



**Application of Learning: Staff and Administrators**

The majority (54%) have been somewhat able to implement ideas into their daily work.

**To what extent have you been able to implement ideas from the sessions in your daily work?**





### **Implementation: Faculty and Adjuncts**

Faculty shared details about the extent to which they have been able to incorporate learning into their courses. Examples include:

...

“I have made my course materials and modes of communication more inclusive.”

...

“I have Included language, references, and visuals that highlight the importance of Indigenous students as a valuable and distinct perspective in classroom content.”

...

“I have added a community module in all online classes. This module starts with the Nicolet College Indigenous land acknowledgement and a recognition of Indigenous students and the three tribes in our district. I more directly invite student voice and student stories into class... I look for and use local Indigenous examples and calendars when designing activities.”

### **Implementation: Staff and Administrators**

The most common example of how participants implemented ideas into their daily work was through increased empathy. Awareness of challenges faced by Native communities allowed respondents to approach their work and daily interactions through a new lens, making them more cognizant of their language. Sessions also provided ideas for structural changes, such as rethinking course design. Examples include:

...

“I have been trying to reimagine how our current structures can be changed to take into account Indigenous ways of knowing, making this a systemic change instead of a one-off project.”

...

“I work with students directly. Many of them are from our Native communities. It is helpful to have an understanding of their values, traditions, history, etc. It helps me to be a better rounded professional and to work with empathy.”

...

“These sessions have been the cause of great conversation starters with my close friends who are tribal members.”



## Personal Impact

The majority of respondents said their participation resulted in increased awareness and understanding of the history and culture of Indigenous communities. Respondents also shared that they want to continue their learning past the sessions. Some respondents noted that sessions helped them feel a greater sense of pride, or reaffirmed it, of the Indigenous community. Examples include:

...

“I have learned how much more I still need to learn and to start listening more and speaking less.”

...

“It has sparked a curiosity about the history of our country that we were never taught (or shall I say, from a perspective that we were never taught) and has led me on the path to learn more. I also gained a greater respect for the Indigenous culture and an appreciation for its importance. I believe that the impact it had on me personally will motivate me more than anything to push forward professionally.”

...

“It has helped me build my capacity to understand and respect the Indigenous culture.”

...

“Inspired me to continue to learn more on my own.”

...

“IWOK has strengthened my ability to envision a multicultural college and given me new tools to help create it.”

...

“I am much more aware of the stigma and misinformation around Indigenous cultures. I am much more aware of how present acute and generational trauma is in our communities.”

## Feedback on What Should Come Next

When asked how participants would like to see the work of IWOK continue, three categories of responses emerged: institutional change, community engagement, and additional learning. All survey responses are listed below.

### Institutional Change

- “I would like to see the college institutionalize processes and practices around supporting our tribal nations just as we support students who step foot on campus.”
- “Surely, as everyone in our community at school and in our wider worlds should be better understood and fully valued.”
- “Continuing this work is extremely important to both the college and the community.”
- “Application of the topics shared to a college classroom. I sometimes did not see how we could apply what was being shared to the work that we do. It gave good context, but more applied knowledge.”

## Community Engagement

- “Opportunity to more fully engage with local Native American communities”
- “I would like the college to have more connections to people from Mole Lake, Lac du Flambeau, and Forest County Potawatomi so that the communities could feel more connected. Working with the strengths of all, we would have more ways to provide learning and growth opportunities to people of the Northwoods.”
- “Incorporate some Indigenous practices into our academics, student services, and operations across the board.”

## Additional Learning

- “I’m hoping staff will continue to have access to learning opportunities.”
- “Regular ongoing presentations would be amazing available to staff. Gatherings (even online) which involve discussions around happenings within our tribal communities. Topics could range from day-to-day tribal happenings to headier discussions.”
- “Specific cultural and historical sessions. Sessions led by tribal leaders in our region.”
- “How the pandemic has increased educational challenges on reservations with limited internet access, etc.”
- “More knowledge of the history of Indigenous culture prior to European influence in the Americas.”
- “The series sometimes felt like glimpses of something more awesome. For many of the speakers, a whole class over a few months, or even a whole day of teachings and connection in smaller groups would be valuable opportunities.”
- “Learning like this takes time. Please continue the webinars. It is okay to repeat or have overlap in topics because participants will take in something new each time.”
- “I would like to see more presentations about the specific Indigenous Nations in Wisconsin.”
- “More about current ceremonies could help Nicolet staff to understand how time consuming traditions can be and why students might miss classes. It is also helpful to understand the respect of elders when some may assume a student is being quiet or disengaged when really they are being respectful. I was meeting with a student just last week that did not want to add a certain class that had been disrespectful to their native apparel, so understanding how important their culture is, is vital to their success as a student.”
- “Also, I hope that future events would include more active participation. Could the college do a helping project in collaboration with a tribe? For example, does the Potawatomi farm need volunteer workers sometimes?”
- “Book reading and discussion, film events, art exhibition, etc.”
- “Language revitalization, sovereignty.”
- “Economics and ethics.”

# Appendix C

## IWOK Course Descriptions



### INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING

#### About the Native American Tribal Management Program

Develops the skills of people who work or plan to work in a First Nation environment including fundamental management skills, and how a Native nation's legal, political and cultural context impact an organization's work.

#### PROGRAM OUTLINE

TERM 1		
Course #	Course Title	Credits
2080922200	<p>Our Ways - Indigenous Culture</p> <p>To honor and preserve the culture of the sovereign Indigenous nations, this course will explore the foundation and evolution of culture, heritage, and identity of Indigenous peoples. Students will evaluate the roots of Indigenous cultures and how they have changed over time in response to historic eras, and relationships with other tribes, communities, and state/federal governments. Students will assess the ties of Indigenous people to the land, how land has influenced culture, and how those ties have changed over time. This course will examine past, contemporary, and future issues that have, are, and will influence the past, present, and future condition of Indigenous cultures.</p>	3.00
2080923500	<p>Our Sovereignty - Indigenous Governance</p> <p>To acknowledge and promote indigenous sovereignty, this course will apply a critical lens and cultural perspectives while analyzing the sovereignty, inherent rights, and the effects decision making has had on indigenous governance and communities. Students will examine and reflect on topics including treaties, intergovernmental relationships, trust responsibility, economic development and diversity, and environmental systems to nurture indigenous leadership, strengthen self-determination and self-governance.</p>	3.00
2080224000	<p>Indigenous Language</p> <p>To honor and preserve the language of Indigenous nations, this course centers language and storytelling in Indigenous culture, identity, and community. Students will learn vocabulary, phrases, conversation, and writing in the identified language, as well as examine its history and status, and similarities and differences among Indigenous languages. The specific language will be identified when the course is scheduled. This course is designed for students with no previous training in Indigenous Languages.</p>	4.00
2080320500	<p>Our Story - Indigenous History</p> <p>To honor and preserve the history of sovereign Indigenous nations, this course engages the past on the premise that we were active agents shaping our story before and after Europeans entered it. This class will examine the diverse and complex cultural, economic, political, and spiritual systems of Indigenous peoples, the dynamics of Indigenous-European encounters, the changing relationship between sovereign Indigenous nations and the United States, and the (re)construction of Indigenous identity. Engagement with Indigenous and Western epistemologies will allow us to analyze them both as valid forms of conferring historical knowledge as well as to seek new ways of telling our story.</p>	3.00

**Total Credits: 13.00**

Talk with a Success Coach about the program outline. Together, you will determine if credits you've already earned satisfy any requirements, discuss possible alternative courses, and choose the best classes if you're thinking of transferring.



# Appendix D

## Day of Education and Celebration

**NICOLET COLLEGE & THE INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING PROGRAM PRESENTS:**

# Celebration of Sovereignty Pow-wow

## NOVEMBER 19-20, 2021

<u>Friday, November 19</u>	<u>Saturday, November 20</u>	<u>Event Location</u>
<p><b>DAY OF EDUCATION</b> 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening Ceremony</li> <li>• Recognitions</li> <li>• Light Lunch Served</li> </ul> <p><b>Presenters</b> Bawaajigekwe Boulley, Bad River Ojibwe Autry Johnson, Forest County Potawatomi/Ho-Chunk Nation</p> <p><b>To Register Contact:</b> Doreen Wawronowicz at Email: kamewin@gmail.com Phone: 715-614-2512</p> <p><b>Vendor Registration</b></p> <p>Vendors must register by contacting: Carol Amour at Email: amourcarol@yahoo.com Phone: 715-439-3078 Or Doreen Wawronowicz at Email: kamewin@gmail.com Phone: 715-614-2512</p> <p>Project event in partnership with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forest County Potawatomi Community</li> <li>• Forest County Potawatomi Cultural Department</li> <li>• Nicolet College's Many Ways of Knowing: American Indian Cultural Competencies for Community College Career Pathways Project</li> </ul> <p>Nicolet College nor the event partners are responsible for injury and/or lost or stolen property.</p> <p>This is an alcohol &amp; drug free event.</p> <p>Social distancing and masking are strongly encouraged, regardless of vaccination status.</p>	<p><b>FULL-DAY POW-WOW</b></p> <p>Grand Entry 1:00 &amp; 7:00 PM Feast @ 5:00 PM</p> <p><b>Honoring &amp; Acknowledgements @ 12 Noon</b></p> <p><b>Host Drum</b> Fire Nation, Forest County Potawatomi</p> <p><b>Invited Drums</b> Smokey Town, Neopit Ho-Chunk Station, Lyndon Station Tomahawk Circle, Lac du Flambeau</p> <p><b>Emcee</b> Dylan Prescott, Forest County Potawatomi</p> <p><b>Arena Director</b> Mike Demain, Lac Courte Oreilles</p> <p><b>Veterans Color Guard</b> Potawatomi Veterans Post 1, Forest County Potawatomi</p> <p><b>Head Veteran</b> Norman Crazy Thunder, Oglala, Pine Ridge, SD</p> <p><b>Head Man &amp; Woman Dancers</b> First Grand Entry - Steve King, Oneida Julie Hill, Oneida</p> <p>Second Grand Entry - Brian Jackson, Lac du Flambeau Melissa Doud-Jackson, Lac du Flambeau</p> <p>*First three registered drums will receive honorarium</p>	<p>Potawatomi Community Center 5471 Thayek Ethe Dnek Meg Sek Myew Crandon, WI 54520</p> <p><b>WOMEN &amp; MEN'S WOODLAND DANCE SPECIALS - 16 &amp; OVER</b></p> <p>First Place - \$700 Second Place - \$500 Third Place - \$300</p> <p><b>HONORARIUMS FOR ALL REGISTERED DANCERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dancers must be in full-regalia</li> <li>• Dance registration closes at 2:00 PM</li> <li>• One payout for both sessions will take place during the second session</li> </ul> <p><b>HOTELS</b></p> <p>Potawatomi Carter Casino Hotel 618 WI-32, Wabeno, WI 54566 (715) 473-2021</p> <p>Mole Lake Casino Lodge 3084 WI-55, Crandon, WI 54520 (715) 478-3200</p> <p>Crandon Inn &amp; Suites 9075 E Pioneer St, Crandon, WI 54520 (715) 478-4000</p> <p>Main Street Inn 400 S Lake Ave, Crandon, WI 54520 (715) 478-2423</p> <p>Four Seasons Motel 304 W Glen St, Crandon, WI 54520 (715) 478-3377</p>
<p><b>For more information contact:</b> Susie Crazy Thunder at scrazythunder@nicoletcollege.edu</p>		






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