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Arizona State UnAmerican Indian Education

Autumn Weaver

Is of Yankton and Mdewakanton Dakota descent and a junior at Arizona State University West.

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Arizona State UnAmerican Indian Education

Abstract

Federal rules prohibited American Indian children attending boarding schools from using their native languages until the 1930's. Success would be more attainable for Indian students if the university implemented programs that acknowledge American Indian experience and contributions. Non-Indian students would also benefit from learning about the Indian experiences in United States history. Culturally relevant programming and a visible Native presence would increase both the quality of education and the university's retention of American Indian students.

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American Indian people historically have had their culture overshadowed by the mainstream idea of what American Indians ought to be. American Indian education has changed over the years; but Native people have a unique history when it comes to western education. The disintegration of culture is an implausible concept; native culture became overshadowed by non-native culture resulting in a continuing struggle to unite their culture with non-native culture in creative and valuable ways.

Tribal colleges and some universities now offer Native students programs for success. Culturally relevant programming has shown to assist in the retention rate of Native American students. Arizona State University West presently has no institutionalized events for Native American recognition, to some extent because of the inconsistent numbers of enrolled native students and partly for lack of a dedicated office staff to implement programs that celebrate American Indian contributions to society. Students writing and presenting proposals to the proper - departments could cultivate American Indian education and programming, as have Hispanic and African American students on the ASU West campus. Native students could then enjoy culturally relevant events and programs held on campus, instead of organizing such events for the university.

In the Division of Collaborative Programs at ASU West, the Native American Programs (NAP) office went vacant for the past six months. Before that, the NAP Coordinator had created relationships between the institution and surrounding tribal communities and native students. The NAP Intern complements the efforts of the ASU West Native American Recruitment/Retention Specialist. The Native American Student Organization (NASA) organizes, sponsors, or assists with all Native American themed events and activities on the ASU West campus. Native students have a great burden on their shoulders, trying to bring culturally relevant programs onto campus.

Native students often take their degrees back to their reservation homes, hoping to make meaningful contributions to their tribal communities. For example, a native student currently in the ASU West social work program plans to work in his tribal community after graduation. Like many other Native students at ASU West, he feels alienated and uncomfortable. His concerns for his community include political and social issues very similar to the concerns of non-Indian students. Culturally relevant programming offers a solution to the problems faced by Native American students at ASU West.

Presenter

Autumn Weaver is of Yankton and Mdewakanton Dakota descent and a junior at Arizona State University West. Her studies emphasize cultural and intercultural communication. She wants to advocate for American Indian people and that desire has opened interesting and dynamic opportunities for her at the university, where she has learned and developed skills that might not otherwise have been apparent to her. Her goal is to become involved in helping American Indian people and other political minorities engaged in activities focused on realizing their potential in peaceful endeavors. She wants to help them find innovative ways to enhance their success through education. She believes, without a doubt, knowledge and confidence assist in the transitions faced by students of color. Confidence enables American Indian people to peacefully walk in two worlds.