

Indian Education Study Group Wants Your Help

Native youth are the most important economic and social asset of any Tribe, and their education is vital to the well-being of Indian Country. Many of you have a personal understanding of this, as you are products of reservation schools; you know first-hand the challenges that face our students – the need for the retention and recruitment of effective teachers, the creation of a relevant curriculum, the application of appropriate pedagogical practices, and addressing the achievement gap. We know the problems and the challenges - now we must consider solutions.

To that end, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan have convened an American Indian Education Study Group (Study Group), who will visit schools and classrooms, Tribal Governments, and Indian Affairs employees to gather information, listen to stakeholder concerns and, most importantly, try to find ways to improve American Indian education. What we should be most interested in learning is how Tribal schools - including those funded by the Bureau of Indian Education - respond to critical challenges in their communities.

As part of President Obama's initiative to support Tribal self-determination, the Study Group will focus on how to facilitate Tribal sovereignty in American Indian education, and how to improve educational outcomes for students attending BIE-funded schools. The Study Group will draw on evidence gathered from recent reports and discussions, and strive not to duplicate discussions that have already occurred.

Members of the Study Group will include Dr. Monty Roessel, Acting Director of the Bureau of Indian Education, Don Yu, Special Advisor to Secretary Duncan; Dr. Kenneth Wong, Annenberg Professor of Education Policy and Education Department Chair at Brown University; Marilee Fitzgerald, Director of U.S. Department of Defense Educational Activity; and Charlie Rose, former General Counsel at the U.S. Department of Education. In visiting Indian Country, senior officials from Indian Affairs will join the Study Group.

We encourage you to reflect on the educational challenges experienced by you, your children, your nieces, nephews, and grandchildren, and participate in these discussions. If you would like to contribute to this study by providing your insight or suggest solutions, we encourage you to send your comments to the following mailbox:

IAEDSolutions@BIA.GOV

The Study Group will review these comments and suggestions along with the information they gather during their site visits to develop recommendations for improving how we educate American Indian children attending BIE-operated, private, and public schools. Indian Affairs will post information regarding the Study Group's progress on the Department of the Interior's website. The Study Group plans to submit actionable recommendations by early January 2014. We will then conduct extensive consultations with tribal leaders regarding the recommendations.