

Nevada's Indigenous Voices: Reflections from Teach Plus Nevada Senior Policy Fellows

OVERVIEW: TEACH PLUS NEVADA

The mission of Teach Plus is to empower excellent, experienced, and diverse teachers to take leadership over key policy and practice issues that advance equity, opportunity, and student success. Since 2009, Teach Plus has supported demonstrably effective, solutions oriented teachers across the country to advocate for educational equity for their students.

Honoring Native Land: Teach Plus Nevada extends a [land acknowledgement](#) to show gratitude and respect of Indigenous communities, the traditional stewards of specific locations and to recognize the original inhabitants of a location before and during the onset of colonialism.¹ We honor the four tribal Nations of Nevada, [comprised of 27 separate reservations, bands, colonies and community councils. The Tribal Nations are not a special interest group or to be considered race based. The Tribal Nations are sovereign governments.](#)²

THE PROBLEM

Nevada's historical narratives in teaching and learning communities throughout the state often have limited contributions, voices, and experiences of our Indigenous People. Noting the minimally inclusive curriculum, [Nevada legislation \(AB 261\)](#), jointly sponsored by Representative Natha Anderson (Washoe County), Representative Brittney Miller (Clark County), Representative Venicia Considine (Clark County), and Senator Dallas Harris (Clark County), requires education leaders in traditional public and public charter schools to provide Nevada's K-12 students diversity and inclusivity in academic standards and curriculum.³

We offer a land acknowledgement showing respect to Nevada's Tribal Nations. We acknowledge and honor the lands of Wašiw (Washoe), Numu (Northern Paiute), Nuwu (Southern Paiute) and Newe (Western Shoshone) of the Great Basin. We also extend acknowledgement to all First Nations and/or Indigenous Nations lands across North America. We pay our respects to the elders, past, present, and future generations, and extend our respect to all Native Veterans.

“When we look at education we need to look at curriculum and how we incorporate our own culture and background in the information so that the students can see themselves in the learning.”

~Karen Shaw, Native American Representative for Interagency Coordinating Council

THE SOLUTION

“In 2012, Nevada State Board of Education adopted the History and Contemporary Lifestyles of the Northern Paiute, Southern Paiute, Washoe and Western Shoshone Curriculum Guide. The groundwork was begun with dedicated individuals who recognized the unique educational needs of American Indian students in Nevada. In 2021, the Native American Curriculum Enhancement Project (NACEP) was approved to shape a culturally responsive system for educators to have relevant and accurate content material related to the experience of Native American Indians in Nevada.”⁴

Nevada Assembly Bill 261 (2021) provides an opportunity for an invaluable investment in K12 education.⁵ Such an opportunity, specifically prioritizing the history and contributions to science, the arts and the humanities of Native Americans and Native American tribes would make an impact for all students in our state; emphasizing the diversity and inclusivity of our community. Below are recommendations from Teach Plus Nevada on how the state and districts should leverage this opportunity.

- 1. High-Quality, Culturally Responsive Curriculum:** Ensure that the [living curriculum](#) and resources are culturally responsive and reflect the rich, multi-dimensional traditions and cultures of American, notably Native American, history.⁶
- 2. American Indian Instructional Plans Repository Curation:** Expand and update the digital library to ensure that Native American students see themselves reflected in the [curriculum, teaching, and learning](#) materials.⁷
- 3. Culturally Appropriate Resource Development & Accessibility:** Provide and connect school communities with facilitated accessibility to culturally appropriate resources, including local and state tribal leaders and community members for authentic, enriched learning engagement and experiences.
- 4. Meaningful & Relevant Professional Learning:** Design and facilitate diverse and appropriate professional learning for Nevada’s educators that supports the creation of rigorous and relevant student learning experiences. The [50th Annual Inter-Tribal Council Nevada Healing, Strength, and Unity Convention](#) is such a relevant professional learning opportunity.
- 5. Tribal Language Preservation & Revitalization:** Nevada’s Department of Education has noted that we must [advance equitable and just educational opportunities for Nevada’s educators and students by elevating and strengthening Tribal languages.](#)⁸

CONCLUSION

Ensuring an equitable and excellent education for Nevada’s students will require a lasting commitment to strategic investments in teaching and learning. If Nevada invests in the teacher-informed and equity driven priorities above, we have a chance to not only honor the humanity and lives of our Indigenous community members, we have a chance to enrich and expand the essential learning of all of Nevada’s children.

TEACH PLUS NEVADA SENIOR POLICY FELLOWS

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ABOUT TEACH PLUS

In pursuing our mission, Teach Plus is guided by our Student Opportunity Mandate: All students should have the opportunity to achieve their potential in an education system defined by its commitment to equity, its responsiveness to individual needs, and its ability to prepare students for postsecondary success.

ENDNOTES

1. *Land acknowledgment*. Stanford Earth | School of Earth, Energy & Environmental Sciences. (n.d.). Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://earth.stanford.edu/dei/dei-library/land-acknowledgment>
2. *Nevada's Great Basin Tribes*. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/80th2019/ExhibitDocument/OpenExhibitDocument?exhibitId=36430&fileDownloadName=Nevadas%20Great%20Basin%20Tribes_Nevada%20Indian%20Commission.pdf#:~:text=In%20Nevada%2C%20there%20are%20%20federally-recognized%20tribes%2C%20comprised,vary%20widely%2C%20but%2C%20in%20general%2C%20tribal%20authority%20is
3. *Nevada AB261: 2021: 81st legislature*. LegiScan. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2022, from <https://legiscan.com/NV/bill/AB261/2021>
4. *American Indian Curriculum Guide & Lesson Plans*. Curriculum Guide and Lesson Plans. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2022, from https://doe.nv.gov/Indian_Education/Curriculum_Guide_and_Lesson_Plans/
5. *Nevada AB261: 2021: 81st legislature*. LegiScan. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2022, from <https://legiscan.com/NV/text/AB261/id/2372437>
6. *American Indian Curriculum Guide & Lesson Plans*. Curriculum Guide and Lesson Plans. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2022, from https://doe.nv.gov/Indian_Education/Curriculum_Guide_and_Lesson_Plans/
7. *Essential understanding 1 - Nevada*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2022, from https://doe.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/nde.doe.nv.gov/content/Indian_Education/Lesson_Plans/EssentialUnderstanding.pdf
8. *Elevating Tribal Languages, Elevating Identity: A Collaborative TIIA-OIE Project, 1-page overview*. Nevada Department of Education. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2022, from <https://doe.nv.gov/>