

South Dakota American Indian Policy Roundtable and Advocacy Training

2010



NPI Mission

To empower a collective voice of hope for our region by cultivating sustainable relationships.

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About NPI

In 2005, the Northern Plains Initiative (NPI) began. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation sponsored a planning grant for Rural Dynamics, Inc. (RDI) to bring together partners in an exploration of the possibilities of our rural Northern Plains Tribes and communities in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

NPI has continued to expand under the direction of an advisory council comprised of members representing our four-state region. Additional support from the Northwest Area Foundation has allowed NPI to grow in strength and effectiveness. The Initiative continues to build partnerships, provide trainings, foster dialogue, and inform policymakers.

NPI Mission

To empower a collective voice of hope for our region by cultivating sustainable relationships.

Vision

We are creating a region where people have the opportunity to thrive in the community they choose where diversity is cherished, the environment is respected, and community pride leads to rooted generations.

Our Advisory Council

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Executive Summary

What currently works to the benefit of Native Americans in South Dakota? How can we work together to expand and improve this progress? What issues still need to be addressed? What are the rationales behind our goals? What success and desired outcomes do we envision? What challenges might arise and how can we be prepared to meet them?

Those were the questions posed to participants of the South Dakota policy roundtable and advocacy training on April 26, 2010, in Fort Pierre, South Dakota. Hosted by Wakpa Sica Reconciliation Place, Rural Dynamics, Inc., the Northern Plains Initiative, and the South Dakota Indian Business Alliance, over 40 representatives from state, tribal, and community entities engaged in the roundtable dialogue.

As we have seen in other similar gatherings, participants were asked to envision the future and frame the dialogue through possibilities rather than problems. Through these roundtables, organizations across the Northern Plains are engaging in policy work and systemic change to reach the shared vision of sustainable rural communities. We are proud to be part of this process.

Tom Jacobson
NPI Advisory Council Member
Executive Director
Rural Dynamics, Inc.

2010 South Dakota American Indian Policy Roundtable

Michelle DuBray of Pinto Horse Woman Consulting began the meeting with an outline of objectives for the day:

1. Learn to effectively communicate passions and priorities with policymakers;
2. Define those priorities through roundtable discussions on issues of pertinence to South Dakota and its Native population;
3. Make new connections and forge networks to begin gaining traction on program and policy priorities at both state and tribal levels;
4. Return to our communities and share visions of action and opportunity.

South Dakota Senator Jim Bradford, Representative Kevin Killer, and Representative Ed Iron Cloud III hosted the event, and the former two reported on their experiences of the last legislative session in South Dakota. They reflected on their successes and the issues they hope to carry into the next session in 2011. Also in attendance were Jeannie Faber, Native American Outreach Coordinator for U.S. Senator John Thune, and former State Senator and current candidate for State Treasurer, Tom Katus.

Having these political figures present, listening, and interacting with participants throughout the advocacy training and roundtable discussions was of great value. Their presence helped create a democratic forum where the ideas being generated could take root among those engaged in policymaking.



Wellstone Advocacy Training

Founded in 2003, Wellstone Action is a national center for training and leadership for the progressive movement. Their mission is to honor the legacy of Paul and Sheila Wellstone by continuing their work through training, educating, mobilizing and organizing a vast network of progressive individuals and organizations.

Wellstone trainers Peggy Flanagan, Laura Ross, and South Dakota State Representative Kevin Killer familiarized and engaged participants in navigating the political process to affect community change.

“Native American people are natural organizers,” Peggy began. “We’re storytellers and messengers. We care deeply about our families and communities and we know what’s important to us. This training was created by and for Native people to build on the commitment to strengthen our communities by developing the leadership and capacity we need to make real change.” As participants learned, there are several steps entailed in organizing issue-based campaigns.

Wellstone recommends the following progression for becoming a successful citizen lobbyist¹:

1. Educate and mobilize a base of supporters
2. Target your audience
3. Research the issue
4. Develop a lobbying strategy
5. Get organized
6. Learn the positions of your elected representatives
7. Meet with your representative and make it count
8. Keep the momentum

Some of the core components of lobbying that were discussed at length centered on the imperative of building relationships and inspiring community leadership by articulating core values and connecting shared concerns.

Building Relationships on Common Ground

As Peggy mentioned, too often organizing is viewed as pushing to get people to do something. Many communities and organizers resist this disrespectful method. To lead, relationships must be built on trust and finding common ground creates the foundation for such relationships.

- **Issues are the concerns that are important to us.** Good jobs at decent wages, accessible childcare, safe communities, and homes free from violence are all motivating issues.
- **Interests speak to our stake in a particular outcome.** “Our interests are what we get out of the issue and what our personal connection to it is. For example, my issue may be increasing voter turnout in a given community, but my interest is different if I am a low-income resident of the area or a nonprofit advocate that works in the area.” Coalitions are built among people who share a common issue, but who have different interests in that issue.
- **Values are the core principles that motivate us to act.** They often provide the deep motivation to act upon an issue. Values are many and varied, and might include a commitment to racial or economic justice or to love thy neighbor as thyself. Organizing around core values is different than organizing around shared issues or interests. Issues and interests may shift and change over time, but values tend to be more unchanging.

Toward the end of the training, the legislators shared their thoughts on effective lobbying by community groups and issue-based campaigns. They provided a brief outline of what, in their experience, captures interest versus what is likely to be dismissed.

“As leaders, we must assess the issues, interests, and values of others to find a shared experience or goal. We are better agents of change if we understand what issues people care about, what their stake is in those issues, and what values motivate them to care.”

Peggy Flanagan



Recommendations at a Glance

State-Tribal Relations

- Increase communication and collaboration. A nation-to-nation relationship must be fostered and a Native Bill of Rights produced.
- Move the State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee to its own standing committee and have a more direct relationship with the Governor.
- Utilize the Year of Unity to advance the interests of South Dakotan Native communities.
- Move the Office of Tribal Government Relations out from under the Department of Tourism and State Development and establish a Department of Native Affairs at the cabinet-level. Each state agency should incorporate a Native focus, not solely the Department of Public Instruction.

Entrepreneurship

- Set aside 10% of state funds for reservation-based aid.
- Increase early childhood education to work on changing the perspectives of Native families to include the importance of higher education, health, career development, financial planning, etc.
- Implement more effective transitional services for populations moving from the reservations to urban areas and broaden services to include training on how to mediate the mainstream financial world.
- Encourage financial literacy and entrepreneurship training through savings plans and loans.
- Facilitate collaboration between tribal colleges and other educational institutions to ease the process of dealing with financial institutions.
- Address delinquency of loans.

Youth Development

- Provide and facilitate more positive avenues for youth development.
- Support funding for successful programs and services such as 4-H, Cheyenne River Youth Project, Youth Individual Development Accounts and financial literacy.
- Encourage the pursuit of higher education.
- Increase transportation to recreational programs.
- Host more roundtables to increase awareness of the needs of tribal youth, highlight the benefits of the programs that support them, build bridges between providers and policymakers who can influence funding, and encourage unity in the pursuit of strong generations of Native youth.

Infrastructure

- Initiate quarterly meetings among tribal councils and state officials to address mutual infrastructural concerns.
- Additional input from Native Americans on laws regulating gaming and social services.
- Additional prosecutors and means within the judicial system to address social injustices.
- Develop long-term strategic plans to support funding for tribal infrastructure.

State-Tribal Relations

In 2008, RDI and the Northern Plains Initiative worked with groups across Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming to host the first regional round of American Indian Policy Roundtable discussions. The subsequent reflection document (available at plainstalk.org) encapsulated the below historical reference as well as provided a starting point for this round of discussion.

- In 1949, the South Dakota Tribal Government Relations Office was established to aid in securing and coordinating federal, state, and local resources for Tribal Nations as well as to serve as an advocate for Indian people. The Commission that governed this office was abolished in 1995.
- In 2001, the Office of Tribal Government Relations was reorganized and relegated to a position under the Department of Tourism and State Development.
- An Office of Indian Education exists within the Department of Education. It works closely with an Advisory Council that represents all nine tribes in South Dakota.
- The State Legislature maintains a State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee, which consists of five members from the House and five members from the Senate, appointed biannually, who may present draft legislation and policy recommendations to the Legislative Research Council Executive Board.
 - In the 2007 session, the Committee adopted an Act to include Dakota and Nakota with certain requirements for instruction in the Lakota language, as well as a Resolution urging Congress to provide additional funding for tribal historic preservation offices.

The envisioned goals of those discussions:

- Accept Federal guidelines and grant recognition to tribal college accreditation.
- Establish education codes
- Teach Lakota language (all Sioux languages) in kindergarten
- Replicate the Federal Indian Child Welfare Act at the state level

In the 2009 legislative session, a number of bills and resolutions were sponsored in an effort to improve the status and representation of Native communities across the state. Among them were:¹²

- Senate Bill 177
 - To adopt the South Dakota Indian Child Welfare Act.
 - Senate Health and Human Services Tabled, SJ 331
- House Bill 1286
 - To create a task force to study the feasibility of establishing a cabinet-level Department of Native Affairs to identify benefits that could result from a closer working relationship between the executive and legislative branches and the tribal governments.
 - House State Affairs Did Not Pass, HJ 455
- House Concurrent Resolution 1010
 - Urging the President of the United States and Congress to restore funding to the federal Indian
 - Jobs Placement Program.
 - Senate Concurred in Resolution, SJ 551
- House Concurrent Resolution 1018
 - Urging increased cooperation and collaboration between state, local, and tribal governments.
 - Senate Concurred in Resolution, SJ 751

Recommencing this conversation in 2010, the prevailing sentiment was that representation and support of South Dakota's Native population was still lacking in state government.

According to participants, the State continually perpetuates a "paternalistic and colonial" governance, failing to recognize tribal sovereignty, and effectively securing the state the reputation of being "the Mississippi of the North" in relation to its Native populations.

Twenty years ago, the late Governor George Mickelson proclaimed a Year of Reconciliation, however, many participants felt that little has been accomplished by this legacy. Hoping to pick up this thread, Governor Mike Rounds proclaimed 2010 the Year of Unity, outlining goals to:

1. Promote active engagement of all races and cultures in South Dakota;
2. Promote education regarding racial and cultural diversity and history in South Dakota;
3. Improve the channels of communication and coordination between all South Dakotans to address shared challenges and opportunities.³

South Dakotans spoke favorably of their neighbors to the North, where the state has had 15 years of sovereign agreements with their tribes. In North Dakota, a State of the Tribal Nations follows the State of the State address. Moreover, a Native Bill of Rights has been established, and grassroots efforts and tribal support is evident.

In this vein, many felt that the tribal members are more at ease lobbying the federal government and maintaining access to the congressional delegation than with their state representatives.

Recommendations

- Increase communication and collaboration.
 - As in North Dakota, a nation-to-nation relationship must be fostered and a Native Bill of Rights produced.
- Move the State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee to its own standing committee and have a more direct relationship with the Governor.
- Utilize the Year of Unity to advance the interests of South Dakotan Native communities.
- Move the Office of Tribal Government Relations out from under the Department of Tourism and State Development and establish a Department of Native Affairs at the cabinet-level.
- Each state department should incorporate a Native focus, not solely Education.



Entrepreneurship

At the roundtable in 2008, entrepreneurship encompassed business, economic development, and education. For business, it was noted that unemployment in South Dakota was the lowest in the nation in August 2008. Despite the economic recession South Dakota still ranks extremely low, second to North Dakota for lowest rate of unemployment at 4.4%, seasonally adjusted for July 2010.⁴ However, the situation in Native communities remains as dire as it was in 2008. On Cheyenne River, Rosebud, and Pine Ridge Reservations, tribes report unemployment hovering between 80% and 85%.

High school dropout rates are disproportionately high on reservations and are perceived to be the underlying factor negatively influencing Native economic development. A study of South Dakota educational inequalities for the years 2005-2006 demonstrated that there was a 44% gap between the total student (77%) and Native student (33%) high school graduation rate (in 4 years)⁵. This number could prove far larger, as there was a 16% gap between the calculations from state and independent sources. It was also demonstrated in this report that dropouts from the class of 2008 would cost the state almost \$653 million in lost wages over their lifetimes.

Entering the realm of higher education, 54% of Native Americans in South Dakota public two-year colleges finished (within 150% time) and 33% who start from public and private four-year colleges who start finish (within 150% time)⁶. A number of explanations were cited for this trend, including the high cost of tuition coupled with a lack of needs-based scholarships for Native students.

South Dakota was able to boast being among the first states to have a financial literacy course as a mandatory requirement for high school graduation. The First Nations Oweesta Corporation “Building Native Communities: Financial Skills for Families” course as well as the financial education programs offered to business owners and entrepreneurs through the Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development (IEED) were highlighted for their success.

For access to capital, the Revolving Economic Development and Initiative Fund provides low-interest loans to new and expanding businesses. The passage of the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) was also praised for easing and securing additional transactions for contracting and industrial development opportunities with the state.

Goals envisioned at the 2008 American Indian Policy Roundtable:

- Establish 2-4 year degree programs for workforce training at colleges and/or develop a state pilot workforce development program on reservations.
- Creation of a position within the Office of Tribal Government Relations that would be dedicated to economic development and workforce development.
- Allowing GED centers on reservations. Creation of job shadowing, internship, mentoring, and apprenticeship programs.

In discussing what resources are currently available for Native entrepreneurship, South Dakotans highlighted the work of their Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) such as Four Bands Community Fund, First Nations Oweesta, Hunkpati Investments, and more. As Jason Yates of the Harvest Initiative explained, CDFIs must conform to several criteria: they must serve a minority or a low-income population, be accountable to the community, offer financial services, be a nonpolitical, legal entity, and offer development services. One current barrier CDFIs face is having adequate outreach in geographically isolated areas. For instance, Four Bands Community Fund serves the entire Cheyenne River Reservation, which is approximately the size of Connecticut.

Government contracts offer financial assistance to entrepreneurs, however Native entrepreneurs are scarce, which usually means the funding ends up in the wrong hands. The reason for this shortage was again attributed to a crisis in education. The aforementioned 2008 attrition trends prevail, few Natives are attending high schools and colleges and even fewer are finishing.⁷ As one participant shared, “When my son went to Central High in Rapid City, there were 97 Native students attending. At the end of his four years, only 9 of them had graduated. The rest, or 90% of the Native student body, had dropped out.”

Generally, Native students prefer to attend tribal colleges, where acclimation and discrimination are non-concerns and where the support of family networks are strong. When Native students do attend public and private colleges off the reservation, they are often unaware of orientation programs and therefore do not to access support services. The barrier of tuition costs remains an issue, and although the legislature recently passed a needs-based scholarship for higher education, expansion is required to achieve any tangible results for Native student advancement.

Overall, it was felt that there are several barriers to Native entrepreneurship. Access to traditional capital sources remains somewhat limited despite the beneficial presence of CDFIs. A Small Business Development Center exists at the University of South Dakota, however, their services are frequently in high demand, and to gain access to them, one must already have a business plan in place. Unfortunately, financial training and coursework on business plan development is often unavailable. A desire for additional mentorship and leadership came to the forefront with regards to bridging gaps in support for entrepreneurs.

Recommendations

- Set aside 10% of state funds for reservation-based aid.
- Increase early childhood education to work on changing the perspectives of Native families to include the importance of higher education, health, career development, financial planning, etc.
- Implement more effective transitional services for populations moving from the reservations to urban areas and broaden services to include training on how to mediate the mainstream financial world.
- Encourage financial literacy and entrepreneurship training through savings plans and loans.
- Facilitate collaboration between tribal colleges and other educational institutions to ease the process of dealing with financial institutions.
- Address delinquency of loans.



Youth Development

To provide poignant data regarding the current health concerns for Native youth, the following statistics were compiled:

- Alcohol-related deaths among Native Americans ages 15-24 are 17 times higher than the national averages.⁸
- Native American youth between the ages 12-20 are 58 percent more likely to become crime victims than Whites and Blacks.⁹
- Compared to all other ethnic groups combined, Native students had the highest rate of daily alcohol use (6.5% v. 3.5%), and were the group most likely to have consumed five drinks or more in a row in the two previous weeks (37% v. 30.8%).¹⁰
- Data also show that American Indian teens had the highest annual (45.3%) and 30-day (29.6%) marijuana prevalence rates as compared with teens of other ethnic groups.¹¹
- Overall, Native American youth tend to initiate substance use at a younger age (typically between 10 and 13, with the onset for some beginning as early as 5 or 6 years of age), continue use after initial experimentation, and have higher rates of poly substance use.¹²
- Young Indian males die of suicide at 4-5 times the rate, on average, of young white males in South Dakota.¹³
- Overall, the suicide rate for Native American youth is 3 times the national average.¹⁴

*Please see Entrepreneurship for statistics regarding educational achievement.

Participants cited underage drinking, binge drinking, and illicit drug use as problem areas only exacerbated by the presence of bootleggers and drug dealers on reservations. There were concerns regarding accountability in the juvenile court systems and due to funding deficits, there has been a shortage of probation officers. In some cases, jail time is a deterrent for repeat offenders, however, in other instances, if jail time is “better than home”, the juvenile court system has trouble keeping them out. The Boys & Girls Club provides effective counseling on drug, alcohol, tobacco and gang awareness and prevention. It was recommended that programs such as this need additional community support and financial contributions.

In reference to the overwhelming trend of teen suicide on reservations, many felt that communities must work to identify root causes and develop appropriate systems of intervention. The Cheyenne River Youth Project has a crisis line; however, there is fear that funding for this service may run dry.

The Cheyenne River Youth Project is also making a difference by offering financial literacy courses and internships in partnership with Four Bands Community Fund. There are also summer and afterschool programs to meet the need for positive recreational activities for youth. Summer youth employment opportunities have been successful, yet again, due to lost funding, they could not be continued. There are internships through schools, but schools could integrate health classes, vocational education, and life skills integrated into their curriculum. At the college level, where the emphasis is on academics, it was suggested that internships be combined with life skills to help with transition. Interestingly, there was equal concern that due to the number of students caring for younger siblings, school curriculums have shifted to teaching life skills beginning in 4th grade rather than strengthening academic skills, and that this, in effect, harms the success of Native students at the collegiate level. Programs in place to address these needs include the GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), FACES (Family, Adult, and Children’s Educational Services), and the Tribal Headstart all of which are recommended for expanded funding. Other organizations such as

the Harlem Children’s Zone are also lending support. Support must equally come from families of students, however, and it was stressed that Native parents need to emphasize the value of higher education, expecting a high school degree as a minimum standard.

There is a strong need for community investment. Participants asked each other to consider the economic impact of funding programs vs. maintaining the status quo. When comparing the cost of funding the 4-H program to the cost of youth incarceration, it amounts to not only a loss of money, but also a loss of human capital. In order to break the cycle of poverty, lack of education, substance abuse, and unemployment in Native youth populations, attitudes need to change whereby we invest in our youth and instill hope in them for a future.

As one participant stated, “The nation has a responsibility to maintain resources to help people and we need to be more vocal about the current inequity of federal funding. Yet how do we change the perception of those legislators who feel funding for Native community development and youth is wasted, that individuals should be responsible for their own welfare? We all need to be partners in the process—as legislators, tribal leaders, and community members.”

Recommendations

- Provide and facilitate more positive avenues for youth development.
- Support funding for successful programs and services such as 4-H, Cheyenne River Youth Project, Youth Individual Development Accounts and financial literacy.
- Encourage the pursuit of higher education.
- Increase transportation to recreational programs.
- Host more roundtables to increase awareness of the needs of tribal youth, highlight the benefits of the programs that support them, build bridges between providers and policymakers who can influence funding, and encourage unity in the pursuit of strong generations of Native youth.



Infrastructure

When speaking about infrastructure in 2008, roundtable participants highlighted the Governor's House Program, which sold 1,700 homes to the elderly, persons with disabilities, and income-qualified families in South Dakota. In general, however, a lack of affordable housing, overcrowding, and homelessness were identified as major issues for reservations, cities, and border towns throughout the state. Issue was also taken with the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs, for, given the poverty and income guidelines, those who qualify for HUD homes cannot afford them if county tax and required insurance are built into their payments.

It was also discussed that more collaboration was needed between the state and tribes on rural water systems. The development of rural water systems is important to all reservation residents and the state needed to recognize that non-Natives are equally served by said water systems. Recently, as a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the Department of the Interior entered into cooperative agreements with tribes to construct the Mni Wiconi Water Project, which provides safe and adequate municipal, rural, and industrial water supply for the residents of the Pine Ridge Indian, Rosebud Indian, and Lower Brule Indian Reservations.

With regards to models of successful policies, South Dakotans praised the 4% sales tax agreement, where money collected as sales tax on the reservation goes back to the tribes, and the passage of the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) among Tribal Councils, which has helped create greater economic development opportunities on the reservations.

Among the policies and goals envisioned in 2008 were:

- Tribal Housing programs working with the South Dakota Housing Authority throughout the process, from consultation through funding.
- Improved tax credit programs for affordable housing
- State-tribal collaboration in creating rural water systems

Among participants this year, there was the desire to develop tribal-wide, long-term strategic plans to develop governmental and physical structures, recognizing that a strong infrastructure is integral to their court systems, tribal police, Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance (TERO). As one participant noted, "We can look for funding to address our needs, but without a strategic plan we can't get what we need for education or for health."

Only 6 jurisdictions have passed the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) and despite expressed interest, only the Oglala Sioux Tribe of Pine Ridge has passed the code for Low-income Limited Liability Corporation (L3C). A recommendation was made that the Office of Tribal Government Relations better publicize these policies so that other tribes can profit from their developmental advantages. A bill has been passed allowing all communities, including tribal, to access surplus funds from the State. This is another opportunity to increase the communication between tribal governments and the Office of Tribal Government Relations.

Among the main concerns regarding infrastructure was the roads in South Dakota. Additional leverage on behalf of the Office of Tribal Government Relations was recommended in these matters. As many tribes share common infrastructural needs, quarterly meetings between all the tribes and the State would help facilitate development, with roads constituting a primary issue.

Discussion then turned to conflicts over putting land into trusts. Nationally, there are approximately 55 million acres of tribal and individual trust Indian land. This has decreased 64% from the land base guaranteed by treaties of approximately 138 million acres in 1881. Tribes with large, rural reservations were particularly damaged by federal Indian land policies from 1887 to 1934.¹⁵ In addition to the diminishment of Indian land as an economic asset, the inheritance pattern and the lack of estate planning in Indian Country have also contributed to the grave challenges faced by American Indians. Furthermore, fractionation and the complexity of Indian land tenure and inheritance have created enormous uncertainty as to what property assets and rights Native people have. Due to an overwhelming backlog of probates, many Indians do not know whether they are interest or land holders or not. Understaffed probate offices have a backlog nationally of over 53,000 probate cases, many of which have a direct bearing on land ownership.

Currently the structure in South Dakota is as follows: The District Board has the power to regulate leases within their community as specified in the Constitution; the Tribal Council Land Committee approves such leases; and the Tribal Treasurer creates the budget. To gain more revenue, especially in larger communities, taxation was ultimately recommended.

With regard to housing, tribes were encouraged to apply for HUD monies for public safety and housing benefits. It was also shared that non-profits are continually collaborating to provide services, training, and technical assistance to communities to meet infrastructural needs.

Recommendations

- Initiate quarterly meetings among tribal councils and state officials to address mutual infrastructural concerns.
- Receive additional input from Native Americans on laws regulating gaming, social services.
- Additional prosecutors and means within the judicial system to address social injustices.
- Additional officers within law enforcement to address social injustices.
- Develop long-term strategic plans to support funding for tribal infrastructure.



Next Steps

At the end of the roundtable event, participants were asked to write two things that each would do to move the work forward in whichever issue area best aligned with their interests and strengths. These were among the commitments made:



“Educate and inform communities on financial literacy.”

“Work towards creating a cabinet-level State-Tribal Committee that will be formed for the sole purpose of resolving the issues plaguing Native American people on and off reservations.”



“Raise awareness of Native CDFIs and how they benefit Native entrepreneurs.”

“Promote ideas that lead to action for cooperative economic development between Indian and non-Indian government officials.”

“Encourage Extension Educators to expand 4-H programs on reservations.”

“Work towards bringing other nonprofits together to organize with the purpose of changing/effecting policies on Cheyenne River and with the tribal government.”

“Work to boost graduation rates among Native students.”



“Keep open lines of communication with state government officials and voice support for positive programs and legislative initiatives.”



“Contact area state legislators, learn who they are, and what they are passionate about.”

“Help keep hope in Native communities.”

From the evaluations collected at the event, nearly 90% of respondents strongly agree or agree that they would like to see a roundtable event happen again. 100% of respondents strongly agree or agree that they will support the policy initiatives that will come from these roundtables.

Resulting from this convening, there has been a surge of activity around the planning of youth roundtables in the state. The Cheyenne River Youth Project hosted a Wellstone Advocacy Training in late July, and is currently collaborating with Horizons and Four Bands to bring a youth roundtable to northwest South Dakota. We have also learned that the office of Tribal Government Relations has been reorganized to the cabinet-level.

Engage in work within North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming! To learn more about the Northern Plains Initiative, host a roundtable in your community, or inform the Initiative’s work visit www.plainstalk.org or send an email to npi@cccsmt.org.



“Attend convenings on the reservations with the South Dakota Community Foundation.”

“Advocate for Indian Country Issues in regards to youth concerns.”

“Share roundtables themes with South Dakota Voices for Children Research Policy Committees and Tribal Juvenile Justice Advisory Group to consider next steps.”

“Work to boost graduation rates among Native students.”

Thank you for your support



Endnotes

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Northern Plains Initiative

Partnerships to expand sustainable rural communities

We envision a region where individuals and families have the capacity to make positive choices regarding their economic future. Communities have the infrastructure and resources to provide residents with opportunities to earn a livable wage. We envision legacy communities where generations of families can live and support each other. Our region will protect people from predatory financial practices and the consequences of catastrophic incidents, helping them keep more of their money and assets. Individuals and families will have the opportunity to grow their assets providing a resource for themselves, their family, and their community.

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