



GROUNDING IN TRADITION.
CHARGING INTO THE FUTURE.



WILLOW SPRING NEWSLETTER

WILLOW – AGEP ALLIANCE

The Willow Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP)

[Willow-AGEP](#) is a collaboration between University of Montana in Missoula and Salish Kootenai College in Pablo, Montana. We are currently in our sixth year and began our partnership to develop, implement, and study a model for the professional success of Native American Faculty teaching and working in science, engineering, technology, and math (NAF-STEM).

WILLOW follows the **6R's** culturally appropriate framework, both in implementation and in measuring success: Respect, Relevance, Responsibility, Reciprocity, Representation, and Relationship (6Rs).

Representing several Native American communities, Willow aims to increase the success of NAF-STEM at both Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) and non-TCUs, while advancing knowledge about issues that impact NAF-STEM in their career progression in STEM disciplines.

Components of Willow are supported by a mixed-methods Social Science Research (SSR) approach and an Indigenous Evaluation Framework.

WILLOW ALLIANCE PODCAST KICKOFF

The University of Montana (UM) graduate school has produced [CONFLUENCE: Where Great Ideas Flow Together](#), a series of podcasts featuring those innovative faculty and creative graduate students who drive teaching and research at UM.

Hosted by Dean of the UM graduate school, Ashby Kinch, the podcast series provides an enriching cultural exchange. Through conversations with individuals from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, Confluence provides inspiration through exploration of unique personal experiences.

[Episode 84](#) marks the first with focus on Willow. Listen to Salish Kootenai College (SKC) PI, Diana Doan-Crider share her story on Indigenizing education with traditional ecological knowledge systems and increasing Native representation in STEM.

[Episode 85](#) features Willow Fellow, Dean Nicolai, who leads the Native American Studies department at Salish Kootenai College (SKC). Dean shares insight on tribal historic preservation, what the practice offers western Archeologists and what opportunities exist for current students in the field.

The [Native FEWS Alliance](#), an “*Alliance of Alliances*” collaborates virtually and in person to serve Native American students across several pathways to further their success.

Willow team members, Ruth Plenty Sweetgrass-She Kills, Jennifer Harrington and Anne Grant, recently attended the Native FEWS Alliance second annual gathering in Tucson, AZ. Focused on access to food, energy, and water systems (FEWS) in Indigenous communities, this Willow Alliance partner and their backbone organization, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) is actively broadening participation of Native Americans in FEWS education and careers.



The Native FEWS 2nd Annual Gathering at the Tohono O'odham **Himdag Ki**, Tohono O'odham Nation's Culture & History Museum near Tucson, AZ (above). Gewkdag Son Ki at the Tohono O'odham Community College (below) meaning, **House of Strength**. It was the first building on the TOCC campus and originally housed Math and Science programs.



“TRADITIONAL BELIEFS INSPIRE WELL – BEING”

Willow's Annual Spring Gathering was held in May at Willow's partner institution and Tribal College, [SALISH KOOTENAI COLLEGE](#) (SKC) in Pablo, MT. SKC's mission is to provide students with a post-secondary education and give them opportunities that support Native Americans, so that both local students and those from across the U.S. can achieve their academic and career goals in their home community.

SKC impacts their community through leadership, service, and research and by continuing to instill in their students the Selis, Ksanka and Qlispe peoples' rich cultures, languages, and traditions. SKC aspires to be an educational center of excellence, empowering students and improving the lives of their families and communities.

SKC ***Ways of Being*** include staying focused on their mission and vision while respecting and appreciating diversity of thought, experience and situation, and mindful transparency in their communication and actions.



Salish Kootenai College campus with the Mission Mountains in the background.

WILLOW FELLOW UPDATE

Former Willow Fellow, **Dr. Serra Hoagland** (Laguna Pueblo) currently serves as the Tribal Relations Specialist for the USDA Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) of the USDA Forest Service.

Dr. Hoagland focuses on building local, regional, and national partnerships with tribes and intertribal organizations, mentoring students in natural resources, and conducting research that is relevant to Native communities.

Since participating in Willow, she worked as the National Program Lead for Tribal Research for the USFS Washington Office and in 2021 with Region 4 as the Regional Tribal Relations Program Manager.

Dr. Hoagland has several new publications and is co-editing a new contributed volume on Tribal Wildlife Stewardship slated for release in May 2023. Her congressionally mandated assessment on tribal forest management (IFMAT report) is scheduled for publication in June 2023.

Congratulations Dr. Hoagland!

The Willow article, *A Growing Willow: The Six Rs Indigenous Research Framework – Stories of the Native American Faculty Journey in STEM* was submitted to the Rural Sociology Journal. It asks Native scholars to reflect on their experiences in academia and was guided by the Six Rs: Respect, Relevance, Responsibility, Reciprocity, Representation, and Relationship. Study results identify the holistic support systems that Native American faculty in STEM rely upon when faced with unique sets of challenges. The data will inform institutions of the need for more equitable and inclusive environments at both Tribal and non-Tribal colleges.

MONTANA CAMPUS COMPACT

As part of its mission to educate for civic and social responsibility, the Montana Campus Compact (MTCC) hosted an eight-hour webinar series this past spring called, [Centering Indigenous Knowledge](#).

Willow Advisory Board member and UM's Tribal Outreach Specialist, Dr. Karla Bird facilitated the series, which included history of the Tribal College movement. The series raised awareness of Montana's rich Indigenous cultures and shared inspiring information on each one of the state's Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs).

Montana is home to seven TCUs: [Aaniiih Nakoda College](#) in Harlem; [Blackfeet Community College](#) in Browning; [Fort Peck Community College](#) at Poplar; [Chief Dull Knife College](#) at Lame Deer; [Little Big Horn College](#) at Crow Agency; [Stone Child College](#) at Box Elder, and [Salish Kootenai College](#) in Pablo.

According to the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) [timeline of the Tribal College Movement](#), Navajo Community College (now Diné) in Tsaile, AZ, was the first Tribal College to be established in 1968.

Largely through the work of initially six TCUs, AIHEC was born in 1973, launching in 1989 their quarterly publication on Tribal higher education, the [Tribal College Journal](#). AIHEC has grown to represent 37 TCUs in the U.S. today, providing a support network in Tribal communities and working to influence federal policies on American Indian higher education.

MTCC was founded in 1993. The higher education consortium represents seventeen campuses with five active TCU member institutions. Their board is chaired by Fort Peck Community College President, Haven Gourneau.

Native FEWS News and articles

Boundary Spanners: A Critical Role for Enduring Collaborations Between Indigenous Communities and Mainstream Scientists - Recognizing the growing need to diversify science with alternative ways of knowing requires long-lasting collaborations and working across multiple boundaries. Native FEWS Alliance co-PI, Marco Hatch et al., have put together “[Boundary Spanners](#).” The above-titled article is published in [Ecology & Society](#), a journal of integrative science for resilience and sustainability.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is planning to celebrate the Eddie Bernice Johnson INCLUDES [National Network will convene](#) this August in Washington, D.C. Launched in 2016, INCLUDES is an acronym for *Inclusion across the Nation of Communities of Learners of Underrepresented Discoverers in Engineering and Science*, and was instituted for broadening participation in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education and careers. [INCLUDES](#) brings together diverse disciplinary perspectives that support research and collaborative partnerships. They are committed to ensuring accessibility and inclusivity in STEM, with more than 4000 members representing K-12 to postsecondary education, bridge programs, informal STEM education. [Registration](#) until June 19, 2023.

This article, [Respectful Tribal Partnership: What Philanthropy Can Learn From the Navajo Nation’s Collaborative Response to the COVID-19 Crisis](#), describes a “*successful model for collaboration among a tribal nation, funders, and subject -matter experts to address a critical problem – access to clean water for Navajo families.*” With details on how the model can be replicated and meet the challenges of a pandemic, the authors demonstrate how successful collaboration can promote equity and justice in any philanthropic endeavor.

The [American Indian Higher Education Consortium](#) (AIHEC) serves as the Native FEWS Alliance backbone organization. AIHEC is the leading organization for Native Americans in STEM. Founded in 1973, AIHEC has grown to include 37 colleges today in the U.S. The AIHEC network of graduate programs, industry partners, and career support organizations continue to assist Native American students in transitioning to four-year colleges and university graduate programs. AIHEC’s vision is “*strong sovereign nations through excellence in tribal higher education.*” They offer weekly updates with a listing for Tribal College student internships and [current job opportunities](#). AIHEC President, Carrie Billy, is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation and attorney from Arizona. She hails from the *Big Water* and *Towering-House-People* Clans.

In March, Willow PI and Native Scientist, Dr. Ruth Plenty Sweetgrass-She Kills (Hidatsa, Mandan, Nakota, and Dakota), presented a professional seminar for the [Indige-FEWSS Native Voices in STEM](#) series hosted by the University of Arizona Indigenous Resilience Center.

Ruth's seminar on "[Food Sovereignty for the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara People](#)" is available on YouTube. See the Indige-FEWSS website above for the next presentation on "[Indigeponics: Indigenizing Controlled Environment Agriculture](#)" and "[Off-Grid CEA Greenhouse for Food Production](#)" on **May 3**.



South-facing elevation of the PFNAC (above)

A teepee on the UM oval in front of the Payne Family Native American Center north-facing entrance



Payne Family Native American Center at University of MT

The University of Montana (UM) sits on traditional lands of a number of Montana's Indigenous peoples, including Selis (Salish), Ksanka (Kootenai) and Qlispe (Kalispel). UM's [Payne Family Native American Center](#) (PFNAC) was the last building built on the campus oval. It is a LEED platinum-certified building.

Willow Advisory Board member, Karla Bird (Two Bear Woman) currently serves as the Tribal Outreach Specialist at UM, housed in the PFNAC. Karla is a member of the Amskapii Pikunii (Blackfeet). She graduated from UM with a PhD in Educational Leadership, with an emphasis in Higher Education. Karla also received an M.A. in Counselor Education, and a B.A. in Psychology with a Research Emphasis/ Minor in Native American Studies. Dr. Bird has worked in various assets of education and had previously served as the Blackfeet Community College President in Browning, Montana.



Karla Bird, Tribal Outreach Specialist at UM

INDIGENOUS MENTORING

Following the publication of Brown et al. 2022 paper, *Exploring personal, relational, and collective experiences and mentorship connections that enhance or inhibit professional development and career advancement of Native American faculty in STEM fields: A qualitative study in the Journal of Diversity in Higher Education (JDHE)* this past year, a second paper stemming from Willow's Indigenous Mentoring Program (IMP) is in the works by this group of Alliance coauthors.

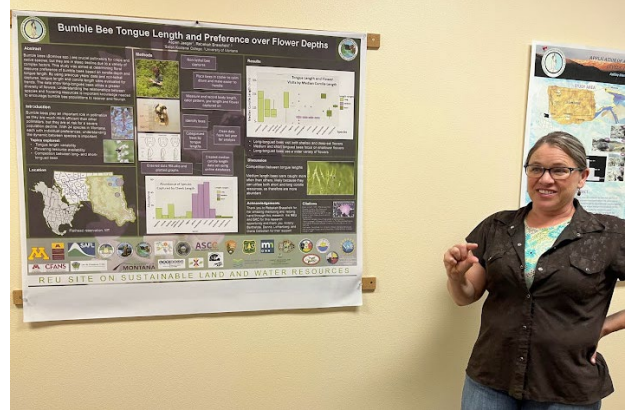
This paper was submitted to JDHE and is currently undergoing final edits and additional revisions for resubmission in June. It was developed to describe initial interviews that were conducted to develop the IMP, implementation of the IMP for Native American faculty in STEM (NAF-STEM), and publishing of the post-evaluation data.

IN OTHER WILLOW NEWS

Willow's Institutional Support Program has conducted interviews with administrators at both Native and non-Native institutions to explore policies and recommendations that support Native American faculty in STEM.

Willow will be publishing findings from their National Climate survey conducted to better understand institutional environments. This paper will focus on Cultural Congruency.

Using a Hermeneutic approach, Willow's latest manuscript titled, *"Native American Conversations about the Culture of Higher Education"* is nearly ready for submission.



Janene Lichtenberg, an instructor at Salish Kootenai College in Wildlife and Fisheries shares the students' research posters during Willow's recent spring gathering in Pablo, Montana (above).

Below, members of Willow pose outside Eneas Big Knife administration building at SKC in at the Willow Spring Gathering.

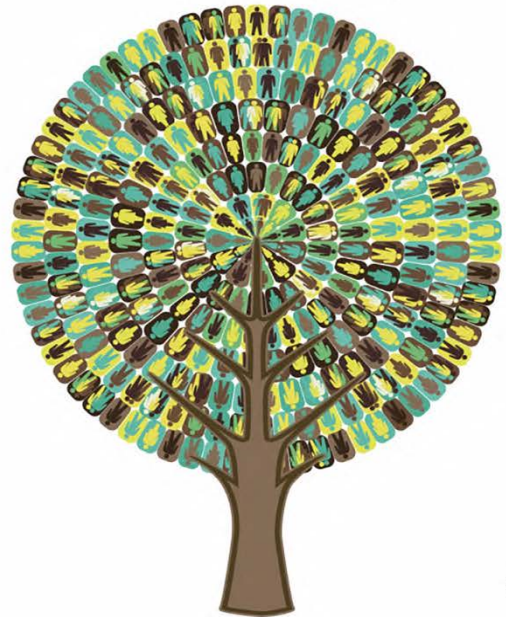
Left to right: Willow external evaluator, Carol Ward; Willow SKC fellow, Dean Nicolai; SKC Native American studies instructor, Michael Munson; UM-PI, Ke Wu; UM-PI, Ruth Plenty Sweetgrass-She Kills; SKC-PI, Diana Doan-Crider; SKC president, Sandra Boham; UM-Willow Program Manager, Anne D. Grant; external evaluator, Berdie Brown; UM-Willow institutional support specialist, Amy Fowler-Kinch, and SKC-IMSI/AMP Director, Steve Dupuis.



Willow Quote of the Month

No single organization alone has the ability to solve the world's most challenging problems. Collective Impact occurs when actors from different sectors commit to a common agenda for solving a specific social or environmental problem.

Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2011



The primary sponsor for the Willow Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP): A Model to Advance Native American Faculty in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (NAF-STEM) is the National Science Foundation (NSF), Directorate for Education and Human Resources (EHR), Division of Human Resource Development (HRD). This is an AGEP-T: Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate – Transformation under these HRD grant numbers: #1723248 - University of Montana (UM), #1723006 and Salish Kootenai College (SKC). Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.