



**Administration for Native Americans  
Native Youth Initiative for  
Leadership, Empowerment, and Development**

FY2017 Report



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**





# Native Youth Initiative for Leadership, Empowerment and Development

Leading | Connecting | Learning | Working

The Administration for Native Americans began funding community-based youth-driven grants through the Native Youth Initiative for Leadership, Empowerment, and Development (I-LEAD) funding opportunity in 2016.



The Administration for Native Americans developed the I-LEAD program to support local community projects that foster

**Native youth resiliency** and empower Native youth across four broad domains: Native youth **leading, connecting, learning, and working.**

Projects funded under this announcement demonstrate an emphasis on culture and promotion of the role of supportive adults, to form a framework for inter-related strategies that support capacity building, inter-generational engagement, and the empowerment and self-development of Native youth. I-LEAD projects must also establish a structure for Native youth to provide ongoing input into the implementation of the project as a means to address the goals of their peers and their community; thus fostering leadership and a connection to community amongst tomorrow's leaders in Native American communities.

Each project that has been funded under this program proposes a

**unique strengths-based strategy** that helps promote positive self-image, protective factors like traditional language and culture, leadership development, historical connections across generations, and **that ultimately builds youth and community well-being.**

# APPLICATIONS RECEIVED VERSUS FUNDED



## ALASKA REGION



Applications received v. funded



## EASTERN REGION



Applications received v. funded



## PACIFIC REGION



Applications received v. funded



## WESTERN REGION



Applications received v. funded

ANA funded  
**37%**  
more applications in  
2017 than 2016.

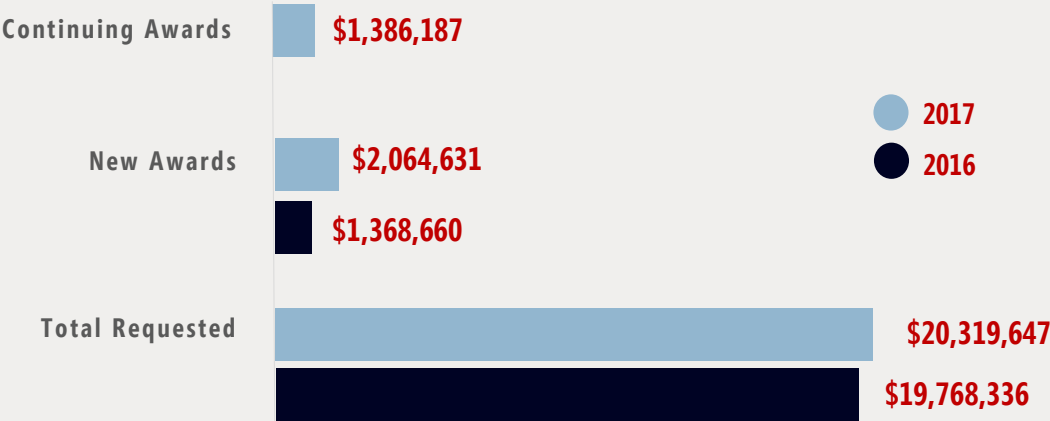
*ANA demonstrated its commitment to youth-driven community-based strategies through the I-LEAD Program in 2017 due to the very high need demonstrated by applications submitted in 2016.*

# REQUESTED AND TOTAL INVESTMENTS

Under this program, ANA funded 5 cooperative agreements in 2016 and 8 grants in 2017.

A cooperative agreement is a specific method of awarding federal assistance that relies on collaboration between the federal government (ANA) and the funded Tribe or organizations. As part of the cooperative agreement, ANA provides specialized assistance throughout the project period to assist in planning, capacity building, implementation, process improvements, and evaluation activities.

## Continuing and New Awards, Total Requested Per Year



ANA invested  
**\$3,450,818**  
in I-LEAD in FY2017.

Combining new awards in 2017 with continuing funding from 2016 totals an investment of \$3,450,818 in the I-LEAD Program for FY2017. ANA forecasts funding \$2 million in new I-LEAD grants for FY2018.

# PROJECT GOAL THEMES

Over the past two funding cycles, ANA has conducted peer panel reviews of 158 applications.



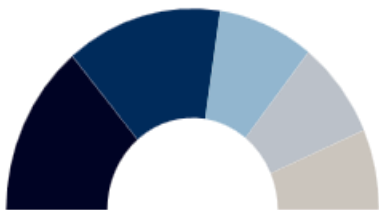
Within each of the 4 domains of leading, connecting, learning, working, projects can propose various strategies that address those domains. After completing a content analysis on the project goal themes, all project goals from the 158 applications fell within one or more of the following 5 most prevalent themes: **cultural identity development and transference, leadership development and community engagement, holistic indigenous wellness, educational development, and economic self-sufficiency.**

Youth quote from a project with significant cultural identity development & transference and educational development themes.

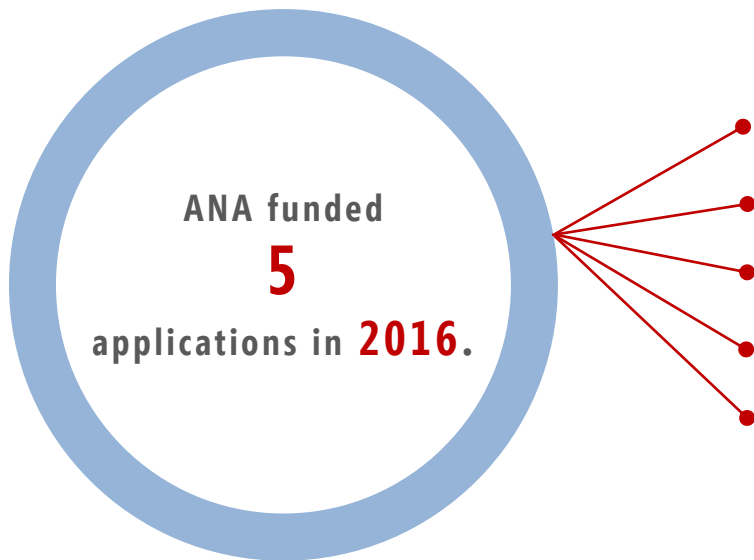
“ I want to be a Native [Salish] teacher when I grow up. It would be a really cool experience to teach here so **I can connect better with everything knowing my own language** and more about my culture. ”

-- Student, Salish School of Spokane

## Most Common Project Goal

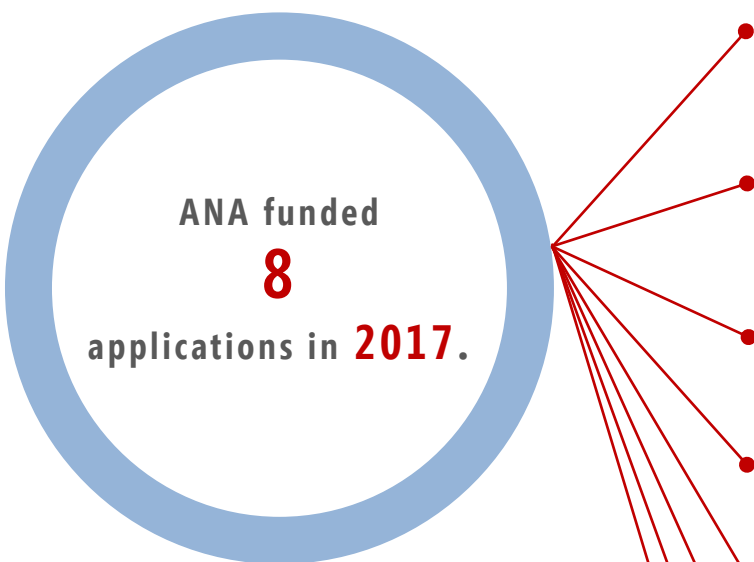


- Cultural identity development & transference 28%
- Leadership development & community engagement 27%
- Holistic indigenous wellness 17%
- Economic self-sufficiency 16%
- Educational development 13%



ALASKA NATIVE HERITAGE CENTER  
CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA  
INTERSECTIONS, INC.  
NATIVE PRIDE  
SALISH SCHOOL OF SPOKANE

*Because these 5 Tribes and organizations are cooperative agreements, ANA formed a cohort to help build a learning community with the inaugural recipients.*



AMERICAN INDIAN BUSINESS LEADERS  
AMERICAN INDIAN HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES OF SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN  
HYDABURG COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION  
LAC COURTE OREILLES BAND OF LAKE SUPERIOR CHIPPEWA  
MA KA HANA KA IKE  
NORTHWEST PORTLAND AREA INDIAN HEALTH BOARD  
PONCA TRIBE OF NEBRASKA  
TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE

*The 2017 grantees are able to participate in any activities for the 2016 cohort, including cohort calls, cohort gatherings, youth committees, and ANA's annual Native Youth Summit.*

# I-LEAD SNAPSHOT



## Top Services Provided By Partners

- Resources and Services **12**
- Facilities **5**
- Cultural Activities **4**
- Education **3**
- Recruitment **2**

**8 Tribes/  
governmental  
agencies and  
8 schools/  
universities** were  
partners in 2016.

Youth quote on the  
importance of  
culturally-responsive,  
intergenerational activities  
for young people.

“What I learned about Cheyenne culture is to **talk more to my Elders than backing away from them** like I used to do. I used to not get along with my Elders until I came here (Native PRIDE’s Intergenerational Connections Program), and it kind of changed me.”

-- Youth Participant from Native PRIDE

"I had the opportunity to meet with numerous tribal leaders and even presented to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs over health issues impacting Choctaw communities. If the Choctaw Nation had not given me funding to attend this trip **I would have never realized my great love and talent for advocating on behalf of others.**"

--Youth Participant

Choctaw Nation's Chahta Himmak Pila Pehlichí  
(Choctaw Future Leaders) Project

# NATIVE YOUTH TELL THEIR OWN STORIES

**Digital storytelling explores the role cultural identity development plays in youth-driven, community-based strategies.**



The five inaugural recipients, Alaska Native Heritage Center, Choctaw Nation, Intersections, Inc., Native Prevention, Research, Intervention, Development, Education (PRIDE), and Salish School of Spokane participate in a cohort-wide evaluation to tell the overarching story of the impact youth can have on their own communities if they are empowered to use their voices and be advocates for themselves and their peers. This cohort-wide evaluation is in addition to their own project-specific outcome indicator tracking processes that demonstrate their individualized successes.

For this digital storytelling method for cohort-wide evaluation, the cohort decided to use a photovoice framework, which is built on three main principles:

**Assist those who are often unheard to find and assert their voice,**

**Develop critical consciousness about issues in their community, and**

**Through sharing stories with key decision makers, become the catalyst that sparks community change.**



The goal of the evaluation is to weave together traditional aspects of storytelling and modern aspects of social media technology to share stories of Native youth with their own voices, through their own lenses. The youth were active members in the evaluation of their projects and took ownership over filming, writing commentary, editing, and producing their stories in digital formats.

## EVALUATION DESIGN

**During the beginning months of the cohort, the ANA I-LEAD team held bimonthly calls to work with the project staff to come up with the methods for the cohort-wide evaluation.**



Both the ANA I-LEAD team and the project staff were intent to develop a

**youth-centric framework to encourage youth to take ownership of their projects.**

In one of the early calls, the entire group decided that digital storytelling would be an innovative and creative way for youth to tell their own stories in a format they are already very familiar with. In addition, there were considerations for cost-effective processes, and since most youth have phones or are familiar with social media, this method would be not only responsive to costs, but also to having evaluation be an interwoven and natural process throughout the project.

The ANA I-LEAD team did a qualitative content analysis of all of the project objectives to identify themes that were relevant to all projects and could be used as outcome indicators. After discussing those themes with the cohort in a call for feedback and further suggestions, the ANA I-LEAD team deployed an anonymous survey to finalize which outcome indicators would be most relevant to measure and presented that analysis to the cohort. The cohort ultimately decided on measuring cultural identity development because each project uses culturally-responsive strategies to engage youth in whatever type of project they are implementing, whether it be a school, leadership program, tutoring or mentoring program, or health promotion program.

Because of these cooperative agreements, the projects were given equal decision-making power in deciding annual themes for their videos. The theme for the end of the first year was

**“Getting to Know Our Hopes and Dreams.”**

The cohort felt this theme accurately portrayed the reality of where youth are at as a baseline for data collection but framed in a way that promoted resiliency and a hope for the future.

Each year’s theme will evolve, revealing another layer of understanding our communities’ youth. Overall, the cohort is excited to learn about the role that cultural identity development plays in youth leadership, empowerment, and development journeys.



And this is our dream.

To have a  
**resilient generation**  
that is able to rise  
above the challenges and  
hardships of life.

--Youth Peer Leader

Intersections, Inc. of American Samoa

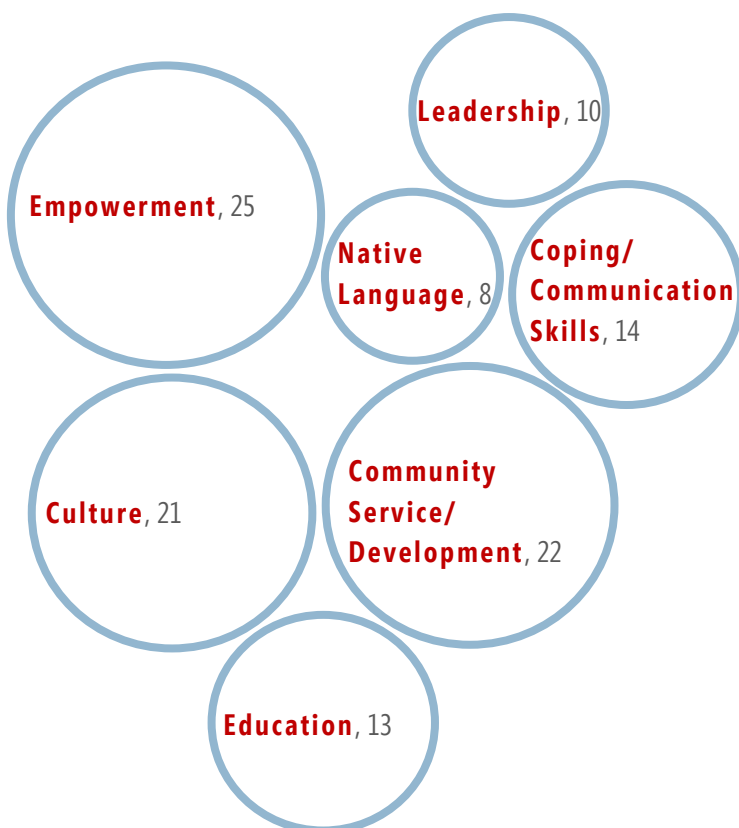


# EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Each project was required to submit either 5 photos with 3-5 sentence explanations of the importance of each photo or a 2 minute video with audio commentary. The ANA I-LEAD team encouraged the cohort to empower the youth to take ownership over the evaluation and tell their stories in whatever way they felt demonstrated the impact of their project on their cultural identity development. The only other requirement was that the theme be “Getting to Know Our Hopes and Dreams,” as mentioned previously to set up a baseline for data collection. One of the unique opportunities with this evaluation framework is that it allows the youth to tell you all of the impacts that they experience without putting a frame on what is expected for them to report with specific parameters. At the end of the first year, youth reported that the evaluation process was also transformative for them as it developed their critical consciousness around needs in their communities and empowered them to develop the strategies to address them. The following infographics, pictures, and analysis are the results of the first year of the evaluation.

## Most Common Themes Reported

These are the most common themes youth reported in how their cultural identity development will play a role in realizing their hopes and dreams. Each youth from each project who was in a video submission reported the need to feel empowered as a youth, whether that be for them to live up to their full potential, have the tools to look out for each other, or feel like their voice mattered in important situations in their communities. Community service and community development were also major themes. Youth reported that their cultural identity development was directly related to the betterment of their communities. Other notable themes were the need to be continuously involved in cultural activities and learn better coping and communication skills.



# YOUTH VOICES AMPLIFIED



“Whenever I first came here I was quiet and really kept my thoughts to myself, but ever since that I realized that it's better to release my thoughts and express them to other people. Because if you keep hiding it and hiding it, soon enough you just have to let it go.”

-- Youth Participant, Native PRIDE's  
Intergenerational Connections Project



“This summer I worked as a leadership intern for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. It was honestly one of the best experiences of my life. I was able to dramatically impact my community, make network connections, learn unique leadership skills, and earn a scholarship that helped me pay for my freshman year of college.”

-- Youth Participant, Choctaw Nation's  
Chahta Himmak Pila Pehlich  
(Choctaw Future Leaders) Project



“Our fa'a Samoa is our living culture. We live and practice our culture on a daily basis. We must understand our culture plays an important role in becoming who we are.”

-- Youth Participants, Intersections, Inc.

# IMPACT OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING ON YOUTH

“What I like about the digital storytelling project is that we were able to portray different issues that our community faces using pictures and videos. It is also very interesting how we use the power of technology to relay a message, because these devices are what kids always use nowadays. The project made me feel so confident that there is a solution to every problem and that we can inspire youth to be a resilient generation. **It is different asking for videos and photos because people can actually express their emotions, where we can witness the moment they answer a question and the different ideas they bring to the table**, rather than a survey.”

-- Participant, Intersections, Inc.

## CONTINUING PLANS...

The results from this evaluation were from the end of the first project year. As the theme is decided each year as a cohort, there will be a new theme for the next project year with all new photos and videos. While it is too early to assess impacts on I-LEAD project participants, it is clear that each of these projects means a great deal to the youth from their communities. I-LEAD truly inspires what is possible when **youth are empowered to share their voices for themselves, for each other, and for their communities.**



“I-LEAD Participant translating **We Change Minds**” in different Alaska Native languages.

-- Participant, Alaska Native Heritage Center



“I want to **go to Harvard University and graduate.** Just be a big success.”

-- Student, Salish School of Spokane