

Philosophy of Teaching and Learning

Northwest Indian College



The philosophy of teaching and learning at NWIC acknowledges that each tribal student has a distinct, place-based identity. The role of the faculty and our support system for students is to create access to the political, social and cultural knowledge that strengthens each student's identity. In order to navigate the contemporary environment of governance and business, and to access services including health, education, and housing, our students must also acquire excellent, marketable professional and technical skills.

From the beginning of time, education has been the means by which indigenous peoples socialize children into the way of life of the people. In our recent history, however, education has been used as a tool of colonization and assimilation. As one of many institutions created to overcome these experiences, NWIC is committed to using education for the cultural restoration and revitalization of the ways of living of tribal students and their communities.

In order to support the education of our students, the faculty actively participates in this effort by developing their own self-knowledge, modeling wellness, taking advantage of faculty development opportunities, and participating in action-based, learning-focused research and curriculum development. In support of our unique first generation student population, faculty use strategies that support students' college readiness and academic preparedness early in their college experience.

Our teaching and learning philosophy is based on the understanding that NWIC provides education that is:

- 1) place-based within a learning environment that intentionally focuses on cultural context and integrated cultural experiences;
- 2) informed by the highest expectations that students be self-motivated, disciplined, and willing learners;
- 3) committed to the development of the skills of our students to address issues of social justice and support the vision of their communities;
- 4) intergenerational with a specific focus on the development of young leadership; and
- 5) holistic in support of students' understanding of who they are and their sense of place.

The NWIC faculty supports students by providing experiential learning opportunities and by fostering access to expertise and opportunities to learn in areas of critical concern to tribal communities. The approaches and perspectives we use include community-based participatory research and scholarship, entrepreneurship, sustainability, Native Studies, restorative change practices, and indigenous service learning. Our pedagogy of teaching and learning is intentional and conscientious and recognizes that our students and their families possess both content and contextual knowledge that contributes to their educational success. The faculty encourages the gifts of our Native students by employing teaching and learning strategies that support multiple intelligences and learning styles.

Faculty and staff at NWIC model the learning community experience for our students and establish communities of learners throughout our system of education. Communities of learners build relationships, responsibility and wellness, foster inquiry and critical thinking, and facilitate the progressive thinking necessary to fulfill our institutional mission of tribal self-determination through education and indigenous knowledge.