



INDIAN COUNTRY SNAPSHOT: MIGIZI

Based in Minneapolis-St. Paul, MIGIZI was established in 1977 to counteract “misrepresentations and inaccuracies about Native people in the media.”¹ In the five decades since, it has evolved into a multifaceted “hub for youth empowerment,”² providing “a strong circle of support” that helps Native youth graduate high school, pursue post-secondary education, and forge their career paths.³ MIGIZI’s Cultural Leadership Academic Wellbeing program for middle and high school students provides in- and after-school supports including tutoring, homework help, cultural immersion activities, and college tours.⁴ Meanwhile, its two career pathway programs offer Native students targeted, culturally responsive career exploration and job training in two high-demand fields: media and green energy.⁵ MIGIZI’s First Person Productions internship “empowers young people to be the next generation of Native storytellers” by learning new and innovative media practices,⁶ while its Green Tech Institute internship equips youth “with tools and knowledge to work within the fast-growing green energy and construction sector.”⁷ Interns are paid \$13.75 an hour, and MIGIZI will soon launch an initiative connecting their internship grads with paid internships with partnering local employers.⁸ The annual number of MIGIZI interns has quadrupled over the past several years, due in large part to the organization’s cultivation of a diversified funding base featuring philanthropic and individual donors, contract revenue from area school districts, investment earnings, and State of Minnesota grant dollars.⁹ MIGIZI’s philanthropic partners include Best Buy, which helped finance the Teen Tech Center, an interactive space where youth ages 13-18 engage in hands-on learning in robotics, coding, 3D modeling/printing, and film and music production, to name a few.¹⁰ In 2024, to support its growing internship programs, MIGIZI created four Youth Lead Assistant positions, which are filled by MIGIZI alumni attending college who work 20 hours per week facilitating career pathway activities and serving as peer leaders.¹¹ The largest summer employer of Native youth in the Twin Cities, MIGIZI boasts an exceptional 85% high school graduation rate by its participants.¹²

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[MIGIZI: Native Veterans’ Voices: Untold Stories](#)

[Every Child Thrives: MIGIZI: A home for youth, a home for healing in South Minneapolis](#)

[National Urban Indian Family Coalition: MIGIZI - A story of perseverance & dedication to our youth](#)

[Minnesota DHS Commissioner’s Circle of Excellence Awards 2023: MIGIZI \(video\)](#)

[The Evolving Education Project: The Work of Migizi \(audio\)](#)

[Opus Foundation: MIGIZI Rebuilds, Provides Stable Futures for Native American Youth](#)

[Indian Country Today: Workforce initiative awards eight Native nations](#)

[Amherst H. Wilder Foundation: MIGIZI Green Jobs Pathway](#)



¹ During its early years, MIGIZI (then called Migizi Communications, Inc.) produced a well-known weekly radio show titled “The Native American Program, which set the stage for First Person Radio and its nationally distributed programming” (MIGIZI, *FY 2024 Opus Foundation Grant Proposal (Draft)*, 2023, p. 2).

² MIGIZI has directly served more than 9,000 youth in its history (Kari Carlson, “MIGIZI: A home for youth, a home for healing in South Minneapolis,” *Every Child Thrives*, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, January 27, 2023 (<https://everychildthrives.com/a-home-for-youth-a-home-for-healing-in-south-minneapolis/>, accessed December 23, 2024)).

³ MIGIZI, “About,” MIGIZI website (<https://www.migizi.org/about>, accessed December 23, 2024); Carlson, “MIGIZI: A home for youth, a home for healing in South Minneapolis,” January 27, 2023.

⁴ MIGIZI, *2023 Annual Report to the Community*, 2024, p. 5. According to MIGIZI, through CLAW, students receive free, “personal, one-on-one academic support in the classroom and in-person or online tutoring four days per week after-school. They also participate in cultural activities after school and on school release days, when credit-recovery options are also available. Students may elect to attend similar programming in the summer. Activities include post-secondary preparations and college tours. Minneapolis students may also join the Native Youth Council, which MIGIZI runs in partnership with Minneapolis American Indian Education” (MIGIZI, “CLAW: Culture Leadership Academic Wellbeing,” MIGIZI website (<https://www.migizi.org/claw>, accessed December 23, 2024)). CLAW’s tutoring services are available to students in eighth through 12th grade across seven school districts in partnership with the University of Minnesota (UMN)-Twin Cities Summer Institute, which pairs students with UMN Scholars who tutor in specific subject areas in Math, Science, Language Arts, and Social Studies to help students achieve their academic goals (MIGIZI, “Tutoring,” MIGIZI website (<https://www.migizi.org/tutoring>, accessed December 23, 2024)).

⁵ MIGIZI, *FY 2024 Opus Foundation Grant Proposal (Draft)*, 2023, p. 3. The IP program’s objectives include: building soft and hard skills for employment through hands-on projects, field trips, and a work-like environment; learning how to use tools of the field in question; working toward industry certifications; and connecting youth to employers and/or career pathways in selected industries (Ibid.).

⁶ MIGIZI, *2023 Annual Report to the Community*, 2024, p. 7. Migizi runs four First Person Productions (FPP) cohorts per year – three during the school year and one during the summer, with each cohort lasting 8 -10 weeks (<https://www.migizi.org/fpp>). In 2023, FPP interns produced an audio series chronicling the journeys of Native veterans in partnership with AMPERS, an association of 17 independent community radio stations in Minnesota (see Migizi, “Native Veterans’ Voices: Untold Stories,” November 10, 2023 (<https://www.migizi.org/post/native-veterans-voices-untold-stories>, accessed December 23, 2024)).

⁷ MIGIZI, *2023 Annual Report to the Community*, 2024, p. 6. According to President Kelly Drummer, MIGIZI established the Green Tech internship program in 2016 due to the industry’s rapid growth combined with the desire of the Native youth it serves to pursue careers in the field (Conversation with NCAI, November 19, 2024). The program involves “hands-on experiments in solar, electricity, thermal, and wind turbine topics; conducting research and presentations; attending conferences; participating in college and commercial plants tours; and learning about financial management, job skills and goal setting, and green economy careers” (Edith Gozali-Lee et al., “Supporting and Developing Youth Through the MIGIZI Green Jobs Pathway Program,” *Phase II Opportunity Reboot Evaluation*, Wilder Foundation, November 2018, p. 1

(https://www.wilder.org/sites/default/files/imports/OpportunityRebootEvaluationReport2017-18_11-18.pdf, accessed December 23, 2024)). Like with FPP, MIGIZI runs four Green Tech cohorts each year, three during the school year and one during the summer of 8-10 weeks each (MIGIZI, “Green Tech Institute,” MIGIZI website (<https://www.migizi.org/gjp>, accessed December 23, 2024)). In 2023, for example, Green Tech interns “learned about solar energy, soldering, circuitry, and energy transferring while successfully building 30 solar phone chargers for our unhoused relatives, who often don’t have places to charge their phones” (MIGIZI, *2023 Annual Report to the Community*, 2024, p. 6).

⁸ MIGIZI, “About First Person Productions,” MIGIZI website (<https://www.migizi.org/fpp>, accessed December 23, 2024); Edith Gozali-Lee et al., November 2018, p. 1; MIGIZI, “Programs,” MIGIZI website (<https://www.migizi.org/forparticipants>, accessed December 23, 2024). Native youth must be 14 years or older to be eligible for the two programs. Migizi’s second-stage local internship partners will include the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota Public Radio, Vision Maker Media, Minneapolis College, Center for Energy and the Environment, and Minnesota Energy Renewable Society (MIGIZI, *2023 Annual Report to the Community*, 2024, p. 9).

⁹ MIGIZI’s annual budget has also grown over the past several years from \$1 million to \$2.5 million (Drummer, Conversation with NCAI, November 19, 2024). In 2023, alone, MIGIZI served 285 total youth, employed 100, and provided 79 with paid internships (MIGIZI, *2023 Annual Report to the Community*, 2024, p. 4). While in its early years MIGIZI was heavily reliant on federal and state support, it currently receives no federal dollars and relies on a single State of Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development grant for 5% of its funding (Drummer, Conversation with NCAI, November 19, 2024). MIGIZI generates revenue through contracts with several area school districts, providing Native students with cultural programming and other academic supports (MIGIZI, *2023 Annual Report to the Community*, 2024, p. 9).

¹⁰ MIGIZI, “Best Buy Teen Teach Center,” MIGIZI website (<https://www.migizi.org/bbtcc>, accessed December 23, 2024).

¹¹ MIGIZI, *FY 2024 Opus Foundation Grant Proposal (Draft)*, 2023, pp. 4-5.

¹² Drummer, Conversation with NCAI, November 19, 2024; MIGIZI, *2023 Annual Report to the Community*, 2024, p. 4. This figure far exceeds the 56% graduation rate among all Native students enrolled in the area’s public schools and also surpasses the statewide graduation rate for all students of 83.6% (Ibid.).

