



INDIAN COUNTRY SNAPSHOT:

Coeur d'Alene Tribe

In the mid-2000s, the education and workforce development landscape confronting CDAT was concerning: just a third of tribal youth on the reservation graduated high school, a high percentage of younger working-age tribal members worked and lived elsewhere, and the Tribe had little control over what its people learned and how.¹ In response, in 2007 CDAT's Department of Education (DOE) created its "Education Pipeline," a comprehensive, cradle-to-career support system for CDAT members as they move from one educational stage to the next, with the ultimate goal to have them become productive, culturally grounded members of the local tribal community.² Enriched with programmatic innovations ever since, the Pipeline instills in tribal members an abiding commitment "to serve as tribal advocates"³ for the Coeur d'Alene people, land, and waters – and prepares them to fulfill that commitment. This includes CDAT's schitsu'umsh Scholars Program, an immersive learning experience for students in grades 8-12 during the school year that "deepens [their] relationship with their homeland, while understanding how legal and political conflicts impact environmental and community health."⁴ Featuring "Scholarship Saturdays" and intergenerational mentoring sessions, the program raises students' "critical consciousness" as "positive change agents through their academic achievement."⁵ DOE also offers a summer internship program for middle and high school students similarly rooted in Coeur d'Alene's history and core values, among them "Membership" – that "we be responsible, informed members...prepared to both lead and serve."⁶ Increasingly equipped with "a strong sense of who they are,"⁷ the number of CDAT students obtaining college degrees has tripled since 2018, with a growing number pursuing graduate school.⁸ To further nurture its people's civic readiness, CDAT has forged curriculum co-design MOUs with several colleges and universities; for example, CDAT and other area tribes partnered with Washington State University to create the Tribal Nation Building Leadership Program, which develops students' "leadership skills and knowledge grounded in cultural principles, practices, and values."⁹ To leverage its people's heightened commitment to serve, CDAT has developed professional development pipelines in two fields of critical need for the Tribe (teacher education and healthcare), and CDAT's Department of Natural Resources is expanding its staff to hire CDAT members to help the Tribe restore and revitalize its land and waters.¹⁰

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RELATED RESOURCES

[Coeur d'Alene Tribe Department of Education](#)

[Coeur d'Alene Education Pipeline](#)

[Coeur d'Alene Five Core Values \(video\)](#)

[NCAI Workforce Development Innovation Spotlight: Coeur d'Alene Tribe](#)

[Coeur d'Alene Tribe Department of Education – schitsu'umsh Scholars Program](#)

[Coeur d'Alene Summer Youth Internship Program](#)

[Washington State Tribal Nation Leadership Program](#)

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- ¹ Coeur d’Alene Tribe, 2015 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, 2015, p. 12 (http://www.cdatribe-nsn.gov/TribalDepts/PubWorks/Coeur_d'Alene_Tribe_2015_Approved_CEDS_Document.pdf, accessed January 27, 2016). In the mid-2000s, the high school graduation rate of CDAT members enrolled in the Plummer-Worley Joint School District, located on the CDAT reservation, was just 34 percent (National Education Association, “Coeur d’Alene Tribe: Leo Reano Memorial Award,” Lesson Plans: High School, NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards Program, Lessons Learned from NEA’s Social Justice Advocates, December 29, 2015 (https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/18141%20CDA%20NEA%20HCR%209-12%20Lesson%20Plan_12-29-15.pdf, accessed March 23, 2016).
- ² NCAI Partnership for Tribal Governance, *Workforce Development: Building the Human Capacity to Rebuild Tribal Nations: Coeur d’Alene Tribe*, “Innovation Spotlight” case study, 2016, p. 8 (<https://search.issuelab.org/resources/33210/33210.pdf>, accessed June 11, 2024).
- ³ NCAI Partnership for Tribal Governance, *Tribal Workforce Development: A Decision-Framing Toolkit*, National Congress of American Indians, 2018, p. 21 (<https://cter-tero.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Tribal-Workforce-Development-A-Decision-Framing-Toolkit.pdf>, accessed June 10, 2024).
- ⁴ schitsu’umsh Scholarship Program website, Coeur d’Alene Tribe Department of Education, <https://www.cdatribe-nsn.gov/education/schitsuumsh-scholarship-program/>, accessed June 11, 2024.
- ⁵ Coeur d’Alene Tribe, *Weaving Past, Present, and Future Voices of the Schitsu’umsh People*, National Science Foundation grant application, 2022, p. 2.
- ⁶ NCAI Partnership for Tribal Governance, 2018, p. 21.
- ⁷ Chris Meyer, Director Education, Nez Perce Tribe, Conversation with NCAI, April 23, 2024.
- ⁸ Chris Meyer, email correspondence, April 9, 2024.
- ⁹ Tribal Nation Building Leadership Program, Washington State University (<https://native.wsu.edu/leadership-program/>, accessed June 11, 2024).
- ¹⁰ CDAT currently has seven students in its teacher education pipeline; meanwhile, its healthcare professionals pipeline was created through a partnership between CDAT, the Tribe’s Marimn Health & Wellness Center, and Washington State University Health Sciences (Chris Meyer, April 23, 2024).