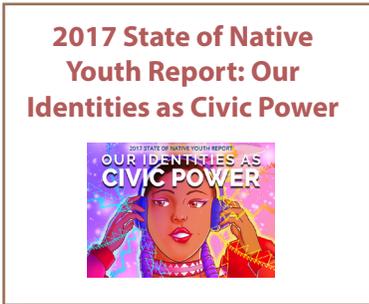


# What's Important to Native Youth?

NAPTAC's Summary of the 2017 State of Native Youth Report

A product of NAPTAC  
**Native American Parent Technical Assistance Center**  
 Summary by Norrine Smokey-Smith  
 April 2018



**Who wrote the report?**



Online at:

<http://www.cnay.org/blog/native-american-youth-our-identities-as-civic-power>

Use this *summary* of the report to support your work with **youth with disabilities who are American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN)**.

Native youth across the nation were asked to **name the major issues** facing young people in their community.



Issues That Matter Most to Us	
<b>58%</b>	<b>Culture and language</b>
<b>43%</b>	<b>Education</b>
<b>35%</b>	<b>Getting employed or getting ready for employment</b>
<b>33%</b>	<b>Mental and emotional health</b>

## Culture and Language

AI/AN youth are the **future leaders of their tribal cultures, traditions, and governments.**

- **Connectedness to one's tribal culture** | Key finding for increasing Native youth success.
- **Spirituality & support of family and friends** | Promote well-being, enhance prevention efforts, and reduce barriers to Native achievement.
- **Support for preservation of Native cultures** | Critical to maintaining tribal identities, traditions, and ideals.
- **Engaging youth through culture and language** | Central to helping youth find solutions to problems in their communities.



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## Education

The **core** of improving educational outcomes for AI/AN youth is **promoting Native values**.

**86%**

felt the best way to combat racism in their schools is to **educate non-Native school staff about Native cultures**.

**Integrating Native languages and cultures into academics can:**

- enhance Native students' educational outcomes and reduce the number of AI/AN student disciplinary actions
- decrease tensions between Native youth and their peers and teachers, creating a healthier environment conducive to student success.

## Employment

AI/ANs have the **highest unemployment rate** of any race or ethnic group in the country—twice the national average.

**1 in 4**

**Native youth**

between the ages of 16-24 are "**opportunity youth**," neither going to school or work.

**Survey respondents indicated that the following economic resources are needed:**

- more jobs for young people in their communities
- greater access to high-speed internet
- financial literacy programs
- transportation to after-school programs.

Cradle-to-career pathways

Culturally-grounded summer intern programs

Tribal partnerships with colleges

Training for professions

## Mental Health

**Trauma**—historical and intergenerational—is a major contributor to mental health issues among AI/ANs.

**71%** said peer

support groups and traditional healing practices (access to sweat lodges, smudging, and intergenerational dialogues) are valuable aids to battling mental health challenges.

**Survey respondents highlighted these crises:**

- **Suicide** | Second leading cause of death among AI/AN youth between 10-34.
- **Opioids** | Native youth have the highest rate of opioid overdoses than any other ethnic group.

**Needed** | More culturally appropriate mental health services, peer support groups, suicide prevention programs, and suicide intervention training.

## Suggestions for Parent Centers

- Check out NAPTAC's narrative summary of the CNAY report, available on NAPTAC's website.
- **Incorporate CNAY's findings**—in essence, the voices of today's Native youth—into your Parent Center activities, materials, and training sessions.
- **Learn about promising practices that promote educational engagement and outcomes among Native youth.** These will inform your outreach efforts to AI/AN parents and youth with disabilities as well as support your direct work with Native families.
- **Share this infographic** (and NAPTAC's narrative summary) broadly, especially with schools and at Parent Center trainings for parents of Native youth with disabilities and at exhibit booths in AI/AN communities.
- **Advocate for Native students in school meetings and planning groups** in which your Parent Center is involved. Especially emphasize how the findings of the CNAY report illuminate the need for schools to include accurate information about Native history and culture in the curriculum that all students study.