Generation Indigenous Toolkit

Becoming a Part of the Network
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INTRODUCTION
President Obama has made Indian affairs and investing in the lives of Native American children a priority for his Administration. After a visit to the Standing Rock Sioux Nation in June 2014, that commitment was further emphasized. The President and First Lady are committed to improving the lives of Native American youth, use their influence to raise awareness of Indian Country, and advance efforts to improve the lives of Native American children.

The White House is partnering with the Center for Native American Youth (CNAY) to design a Native youth engagement strategy that ensures:

1. Native American youth have new access to resources and support that help them to succeed, and
2. National decision-makers (the Administration, policymakers, etc.) are hearing from and prioritizing Native children whose lives are impacted by policies, legislation, and programming created in Washington, DC.

“The United States shares a sacred bond with our Native nations. We have a sacred responsibility to all our young people, including Native youth!” – President Barack Obama

WHO SHOULD BE INTERESTED IN THIS TOOLKIT?
This toolkit was developed as a resource to share ideas about getting involved in Generation Indigenous (Gen-I) and the Ambassador Program. Listed below are a few questions to find out if this toolkit is something you might use:

- Do you want to get involved in Generation Indigenous and make a difference in your community?
- Do you know of a young person from your community who would want to join you?
- Are you willing and able to organize a small youth group, youth council, or ambassador team to help change your community?

“Youth -- they just need the right tools, and maybe they can empower themselves.”

- Chase Iron Eyes
Are you ready to lead other youth in your community?

If you answered “yes” to any one of these questions, then it sounds like you’re ready to step up to the plate and become a community leader, so you will want to continue reading through this toolkit to further develop ideas about how to organize and create a Gen-I ambassador team.

BACKGROUND - CENTER FOR NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH

The Center for Native American Youth (CNAY) at the Aspen Institute was created in 2011 by former US Senator Byron Dorgan with $1 million from his excess campaign funds. CNAY is dedicated to improving the lives of Native American youth through communication, policy development and advocacy. CNAY is aimed at bringing greater national attention to the challenges and successes facing Native youth, with special emphasis on preventing the tragic rates of suicide among young people in tribal and urban Indian communities. Although a part of the Aspen Institute, CNAY is also overseen by a board of advisors and youth advisory board.

GENERATION INDIGENOUS – THE START OF A NETWORK

Generation Indigenous (Gen-I) was launched by President Obama on December 3rd, 2014. Gen-I is a Native youth initiative focused on removing the barriers that stand between Native youth and their opportunity to succeed. This initiative will take a comprehensive, culturally appropriate approach to help improve the lives and opportunities for Native youth and will include:

- New Native Youth Community Projects to support culturally relevant coordinated strategies designed to improve the college-and-career readiness of Native children and youth.
- New National Native Youth Network program in partnership with the Aspen Institute’s Center for Native American Youth.
- The release of the White House Native Youth Report that acknowledges past failures of federal policy on the education of Native students, explores the breadth of the challenges facing Native children, and makes recommendations for a path forward.
• The launch of the Cabinet Native Youth Listening Tour, which will begin in 2015 as part of the President’s call to hear directly from Native youth on how to bolster federal policies to improve youth outcomes.

• The first ever White House Tribal Youth Gathering to engage hundreds of Native youth in a day-long convening in the summer of 2015.

**National Native Youth Network.**
The White House, the U.S. Department of the Interior and the Center for Native American Youth at the Aspen Institute (CNAY) are partnering to launch a new National Native Youth Network (NNYN) in support of the Generation Indigenous Initiative (Gen-I). CNAY and the NNYN will provide a sustainable platform to engage and provide educational and training opportunities to Native American youth across the United States. CNAY resources will include support for educational scholarships, entrepreneurship training, and mentors, and the Network will create a platform to integrate Native youth voices into the national dialogue.

**Goal:** The goal of the National Native Youth Network is to help the youngest First Americans reach their full potential by:

1) Building a platform to voice youth challenges and successes,

2) Increasing Native youth access to educational and economic resources and opportunities, including scholarships, training, mentors, and support; and

3) Connecting Native youth with each other in a leadership network.

The Network was announced by the White House in December 2014, and will be followed by an official launch at the White House in February 2015.

**GENERATION INDIGENOUS – NETWORK TOOLKIT**

**Purpose & Description.**
This toolkit was developed to encourage local tribal and urban Indian communities to get involved with Generation Indigenous and the National Native Youth Network (NNYN). The NNYN will create a network of influential Native youth leaders and raise national awareness of Native American youth, their communities and all of Indian Country. The NNYN does not seek to replace the direct service, on-the-ground change; rather it will give those programs access to additional support and resources. The NNYN will share resources, provide training, and technical assistance to participating youth. NNYN participants will have opportunities to develop
tremendous skills in leadership and advocacy, as well as establish support systems and identify resources for academic success, as well as tools and networks they can bring back to their home communities. Additionally, NNYN participants will become engaged in the Administration and CNAY’s work, trips to Indian Country, and other initiatives to shine a national spotlight on Native American youth priorities.

In this toolkit, you will find information outlining suggestions for key steps and areas of discussion which will help any individual, tribe, youth council or communities create their own Native Youth Ambassador Team.

SUGGESTED TOOLS & KEY STEPS

Below are key steps to help you get involved in Gen-I. Additionally, the toolkit can be utilized in developing your own Native Youth Ambassador Team. CNAY would like to emphasize that these suggested tools and key steps were created as a guideline that can be adapted, tailored or even completely disregarded! This toolkit is merely providing ideas to get involved with Gen-I and start creating your Native Youth Ambassador Team.

Let’s get started!

I. Learn How to Become a Youth Ambassador for the Gen-I Network!

Gen-I offers an exciting opportunity for young people to get involved with their communities and Indian Country, as well as a network of Native youth who share a passion for leadership and positive change. There are many ways for young people (24 and under) to get involved. First, make sure to join Gen-I on Facebook, visit our website, and sign up for updates! It’s important that you stay connected so that you can receive updates on important information about Gen-I, the NNYN, and important resources! Next, join or create a youth council or youth group in your community and come up with ideas for initiatives to help make your community a better place.

Finally, accept the challenge to become a Youth Ambassador by taking these steps:

1. **ACT**: find a new way to do something positive in your community and perform the activity!
2. **CAPTURE**: Document it through a short summary (3-4 sentences) and with photos and video.
3. **SHARE**: Send CNAY your story through their website – [www.cnay.org](http://www.cnay.org) or through the GEN-I Facebook!
4. **PARTICIPATE**: As a member of the Gen-I network, you will be invited to send a representative or multiple representatives to the first ever White House Tribal Youth Gathering in Washington, DC.

**II. Getting Young People Interested.**

Getting other youth involved can sometimes be difficult, but here are a few ideas about how to get other young people involved using incentives and other strategies:

- Think about incentives (aka prizes)! Ask youth what would motivate them to be involved and think about what you might want, too.

- Post a question or poll with your friends on Facebook or Twitter to ask who knows about Gen-I and who wants to get involved in creating positive change for the community. Track your responses and keep young people involved from the start!

- Share this list of potential benefits with your peers to gain interest:
  - Ambassador Teams and Youth Ambassadors will be recognized by President Obama and the Center for Native American Youth
  - Ambassador Teams will have access to support from CNAY with youth-led initiatives; including sharing funding opportunities to implement Youth Ambassador-led initiatives
  - Ambassador Teams will be connected to the National Native Youth Network, including information about competitive internships and scholarships, as well as connections with young Native leaders across the country, and access to CNAY expertise to support Youth Ambassador-driven solutions
  - Ambassador Teams will be celebrated through spotlight articles on White House and CNAY media platforms
  - Ambassador Teams will select a Youth Ambassador who will have access to travel scholarship funds for a trip to Washington, DC to participate in the 2015 National Native Youth Network Conference

- Be Creative and find other fun ways to get your peers involved!
III. Developing a Youth Council or Youth Group

Tribal Youth Ambassador Teams can be a brand new youth group or one that already exists on a local level – youth council, student council, after school group, rotary club, etc. Youth can engage new young people by building upon a group that already exists or creating a brand new youth group that can serve as an Ambassador Team.

If you want to create a new youth group, there are plenty of resources available online that you can utilize to help you get started. For Example:

- The United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY) has many resources on their website for how young people can get involved in youth councils. They even have a toolkit that includes steps for organizing a new youth council.

- The Youth Transition Funders Group (YTFG) which provides resources to help all youth make a successful transition to adulthood by age 25, has a toolkit that details the process of forming a youth advisory council. While the toolkit is customized for foster youth, the principles can be used for any group.

- GenerationOn is a global youth service movement igniting the power of all youth to make their mark on the world. Seeing a need for more youth involvement in communities, GenerationOn created a toolkit to help those who are interested in developing a youth council. This toolkit is unique in that it goes beyond the instructions for creating a youth council and shows plenty of examples for how a youth group should operate.

IV. The Ambassador Team Program

The goal of this Toolkit is to provide step-by-step instructions on how to (1) create an Ambassador Team, (2) accomplish a goal on a local level set by the Ambassador Team, and (3) directions for how to access support and resources through the NNYN. With support from the Center for Native American Youth (CNAY), this Toolkit will serve as a framework for Ambassador Teams to review and customize steps that support the development of their youth-led initiatives (wellness activity, trainings for communities, event with motivational speakers, etc.).

Ambassador Team Qualifications
- Participants must be 24 years old or younger and each Ambassador Team must have a minimum of five members

“Take the first step with an idea, just to get their idea in motion”
- Cierra Fields
• Ambassador Teams select/establish an advisor or program point person

• Ambassador Teams seeking funding or other resources will need to have a fiscal sponsor

• Ambassador Teams must submit a National Native Youth Network membership form to CNAY/White House

• Once the Ambassador Team is established, the group must send an introductory letter (using the introductory letter from the toolkit) to a leadership body in their community – tribal government, school administration, youth council, existing youth groups, etc.

• Ambassador Teams are encouraged to submit quarterly “Ambassador Team Updates” to CNAY and the leadership body who received an introductory letter. Communication is key to keeping partners and networks engaged!

**What is Your Role as an Ambassador?**

A Youth Ambassador will be selected by Ambassador Teams to represent youth-led initiatives on a national level. In terms of **roles:**

• Ambassadors serve as liaisons between the White House, CNAY, and their Ambassador Teams

• Ambassador Teams and their communities are eligible to receive a visit from the White House or CNAY. Should the opportunity arise, Ambassadors will assist with community visits

• Ambassadors share messages with their Ambassador Teams and communities from the White House and CNAY regarding Native youth opportunities and resources

• Ambassadors invite and engage new youth from the community to get involved in the Ambassador Team

• Ambassadors participate in the first ever White House Tribal Youth Gathering

• In preparation for the gathering, Ambassadors lead facilitated discussions with Ambassador Teams to better understand Native youth priorities to share in Washington, DC

• Following the gathering, Ambassadors report to their Ambassador Teams about the conference, trainings, and priorities discussed with national decision-makers
V. What’s your message? (ACT)

Now that you know more about Ambassador Teams, you can start figuring out what positive actions you want to initiate in your community. Our hope is that through your positive initiatives, you will make a positive change in your community.

The best place to start is by figuring out what issues may be facing your community. Make a list of the issues that you might be interested in tackling. Hold a brainstorming session with your Ambassador Team to figure out what sort of projects or events you can plan that will help bring awareness to an issue or help to solve a problem. Remember to always keep a positive outlook and to always do something beneficial with your time and efforts. Some ideas for how you can make a positive impact in your community are:

1. Volunteer in your community (at a food bank or homeless shelter, picking up garbage, etc.)
2. Plan and coordinate alcohol and drug-free events
3. Establish a scholarship fund
4. Present workshops topics like leadership, community service, bullying prevention, peer pressure, etc.

For more ideas on how you can make a difference in your community click here.

VI. Identifying Partners & Encouraging Others.

Once you have an idea of how you and your team would like to make a positive impact in your community, the next step will be identifying partners and engaging others in your community. This can involve a fun brainstorming session with your Ambassador Team to think through who or what groups need or should be involved in ensuring your project’s success.
Try to be strategic in thinking about what individuals or entities will bring to the table to support your project development and implementation. Initial ideas for partners could include:

- **Tribal Councils** or leaders may be interested in supporting this youth-led effort and could have ideas on what the best methods are for implementing your project or tackling the issue you’ve selected.

- **School administrators** can help promote the project and recruit volunteers.

- **Tribal youth departments or programs** could also help identify potential venues for events or additional support.

- **Boys and Girls Clubs or Big Brothers Big Sisters** programs may offer in-kind or additional support.

- **Local newspapers or radio stations** could help spread the word about the program throughout the community.

- Get creative and try to get as many people involved as possible!!

**VII. Developing a budget.**

If you think your programs may cost money, a next step is to develop a budget for your project. This toolkit will not fully describe how to create a budget, but instead we will list a few items that could be considered when thinking about possible costs. With that being said, please see the list of potential costs when developing your project:

- Snacks and other refreshments
- Travel costs (if needed)
- Venue for events
- Printing costs for flyers, announcements, etc.

Once you and your team have an idea of what it would cost to create this initiative, you can start to solicit (through outreach calls, letters of support, etc.) financial support from individuals or entities discussed in the previous step - identifying partners and engaging others. CNAY has some resources that they can connect Ambassador Teams with that may help them in implementing their events and projects.
Additional financial supporters or fundraising ideas could include, but are not limited to:

- Local corporations
- Local markets
- Tribal governments
- Diabetes prevention or wellness programs
- Mini-Grants for Community Service (Example: WeRNative)
- Tribal foundations
- Car washes
- Bake sales

**VIII. Spreading the word about your project! (CAPTURE)**

Let’s recap. You have done all the leg work in getting people on board with your ideas, you’ve recruited and engaged partners and now it’s time for implementation. You and your Ambassador Team will need to be proactive and creative in spreading the word about your project, but you will also need to make sure to document all aspects of the project – from start to finish. This part of the process can be fun and is an opportunity to get your creative juices flowing! Listed below are some tips and other things to keep in mind as you document your project in a positive manner:

- Keep a list of how many youth are staying engaged in the Ambassador Team
- Take photos of team members and action shots during meetings and while implementing your community project
- Pull together a video with team members describing their experiences creating positive change in the community
- Ask the team to work together to create a collage or story line about getting involved in Gen-I as a youth ambassador team
- Document and share any story highlights of your project mentioned in local media
- Be creative! We want you to have fun capturing your positive impact!
IX. Share what you’ve captured! (SHARE)

After you’ve implemented your project and documented it in a creative and fun manner, make sure to share it with us! You will need to introduce yourself and your group to CNAY by submitting a National Native Youth Network membership form first. Then you will share what you’ve captured with CNAY, which we will highlight on Facebook, Twitter, and our webpages!

By sharing your Ambassador Team’s positive efforts, we can show what Native youth around the country are doing to promote hope in their communities! Make sure you can awesome photos so we can post them and recognize your hard work!

X. Participate!

As a member of the Gen-I network, you will be invited to send a representative, or multiple representatives, to the first ever White House Tribal Youth Gathering in Washington, DC. Youth Ambassadors will show off their youth-led initiatives on a national level. The conference will include:

- Leadership, advocacy and facilitation trainings
- Workshops on accessing education-related resources (scholarships, FAFSA, financial services at school, etc.)
- Networking reception with organizations, agencies, and other youth support networks in DC
- Youth panel discussion with the Administration to discuss education priorities in Indian Country
- Youth panel discussion with the Administration on effective youth engagement and building support systems
- Overview of CNAY Technical Assistance for Ambassador Teams
- Discussion on utilizing NNYN
- Meetings with Capitol Hill staffers
CLOSING MESSAGE
Congratulations on taking this step to help make your communities better places through joining the Gen-I Network as a Youth Ambassador! The Center for Native American Youth wishes you the best of luck with brainstorming, organizing and planning your local projects and events. Please contact our team if you have any questions or require any help as you move forward with implementing positive change in your community.

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