

ABSTRACT - THE NATIVE SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Northeastern State University (“NSU”) and the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma (“the Nation”), both located in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, are united in recognizing the need for and ability to educate and attain certification for Native American teachers uniquely qualified to teach Native American students. We are committed to preparing a minimum of 20 Native Scholars who possess special training, knowledge and experiences to teach in High Indian Population (“HIP”) schools.

Two factors may set this proposal apart. First, this application is based on research drawn from local and national samples of Native students conducted by the Oklahoma Institute for Learning Styles (OIL) sponsored by the NSU College of Education. OIL has solid, quantitative evidence identifying learning styles and brain-based strategies which have resulted in dramatically higher scores on achievement tests by Native students. The Cherokee Nation is committed to promulgating these strategies in schools within its boundaries by assisting NSU in placing Scholars in internship experiences in these schools.

Second, Oklahoma’s unique history has contributed to the diminution of cultural knowledge, resulting in the hiring of Native teachers who have very few cultural connections. The Nation will take a lead role by providing opportunities to immerse these Scholars in rich cultural experiences. This effort will honor Jerome Bruner’s insight that “education is the embodiment of a cultural way of life, not just preparation for it.”

NSU graduates more Native students than any other college or university in America. OIL is the leader in quantitative research on Native learning styles. The Cherokee Nation provided the first free, compulsory, co-educational school system in the world.

Working in collaboration, it is not unreasonable to believe that Tahlequah, where the Trail of Tears ended, could be the venue to once again lead the way to educational success.