Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz (Diné)

Nominated by Susan C. Faircloth
Yazzie-Mintz Supporting Materials

The following documents are included in support of Dr. Yazzie-Mintz’s nomination for the 2020 Brock International Prize in Education:

1) Letter of Nomination by Dr. Susan Faircloth, Professor and Director, School of Education, Colorado State University

2) Short Bio for Dr. Yazzie-Mintz

3) Dr. Yazzie-Mintz’s CV

4) Listing of selected published works in the field of Early Childhood Education by Dr. Yazzie-Mintz and collaborators – links provided for works available for public access on the Internet

5) Listing of press releases and news articles – links provided as available

6) Links to websites and other forms of social media regarding relevant early childhood-focused projects

7) Examples of featured presentations

8) Additional Evidence of Impact on the Field of Early Childhood Education

9) Four (4) letters of support from colleagues and collaborators:
   a) Randall Akee, Ed.D., University of California Los Angeles
   b) Nahrin Aziz-Parson, M.Ed., Northwest Indian College
   c) Dr. Cheryl Crazy Bull, Ph.D., American Indian College Fund
   d) Joelfré Grant, M.A.T., Brazelton Touchpoints Center, Boston Children’s Hospital
   e) Keiki Kawai’ae’a, Ph.D., University of Hawai’I Hilo
To My Fellow Brock Prize Jurors,

It is with great humility and honor that I nominate Dr. Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz, former Vice President for Program Initiatives at the American Indian College Fund, for the 2020 Brock International Prize in Education. At the College Fund, Dr. Yazzie-Mintz oversaw both the Wakan yeja (“Sacred Little Ones”) and K’e’ Early Childhood Education Initiatives. As I recently wrote, these initiatives demonstrate “the power of an ‘ethic of possibility’ rooted and grounded in Indigenous Knowledges and Ways of Knowing. Although funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, these initiatives envisioned by members of the tribal college community who recognized the sacredness of our little ones and worked to ensure that those who educate and care for them are trained and supported in ways that honor and respect the cultural, social, and emotional strengths of these children, their families, and communities. This is a monumental undertaking that serves to strengthen the preparation of early childhood educators and caregivers, using a culturally relevant, responsive, and asset-based approach.” Under Dr. Yazzie-Mintz’s leadership and vision, this initiative has positively impacted the lives of nearly 4,000 Indigenous children; 2,400 families; and 1,200 teachers across the nation.

A member of the Navajo (Diné) Nation, Dr. Yazzie-Mintz has committed her life to developing and implementing culturally-grounded educational programs and services for American Indian and Alaska Native children, their families, communities, and tribes. Approximately 10 years ago, Dr. Yazzie-Mintz left a tenure track faculty position at Indiana University to lead the College Fund’s early childhood initiative. This initiative set the stage for tribal colleges to engage in culturally and linguistically relevant, and much needed, professional development and support of early childhood education programs serving diverse tribal communities from New Mexico to Alaska. I had the honor of reviewing the applicants seeking funding for this initiative. It was evident then that Dr. Yazzie-Mintz was the perfect person to lead this work. Her brilliant mind and deep understanding of and commitment to Indigenous education, coupled with focus, determination, passion, humor, and the ability to move dreams into action, ignited and propelled the hearts and minds of all those who came in contact with her.

Dr. Yazzie-Mintz recently embarked on a new phase of life, as the co-founder and principal consultant for the First Light Education Project, LLC. In this role, she will continue to work in and with Indigenous communities across the country. Although this is a great loss to the tribal college community, Dr. Yazzie-Mintz leaves knowing that she has helped to build the infrastructure and capacity necessary for the College Fund and its constituents to engage in this work long after she has gone. What better way to honor Dr. Yazzie-Mintz’s legacy than to award her the Brock Prize, an award that will not only provide her with monetary support needed to continue her life’s work but will also serve as an important marker of the impact she has had and continues to have on the nation’s Indigenous peoples and our children. As an Indigenous person, and the mother of a young child, I know firsthand the importance of this work in ensuring the safety, security, and success of Indigenous peoples and communities. I hope that my fellow jurors will also see and honor this work.

Sincerely,

Susan Faircloth
Susan C. Faircloth, Ph.D.
Professor & Director, School of Education
Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz, Ed.D.

Bio

Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz, Ed.D., is co-founder and principal consultant for the First Light Education Project, LLC (www.firstlighteducationproject.org). Yazzie-Mintz, joins First Light Education Project full-time after serving 8 years at the American Indian College Fund. Since 2011, Yazzie-Mintz designed and directed the College Fund’s Tribal College and University (TCU) Early Childhood Education Initiatives – growing the programming to nearly $9 million investment in Native early learning systems of care and learning, an investment directly impacting Tribal Colleges and Universities located in the states of Alaska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Washington, and Wisconsin. As Vice President of Program Initiatives, Yazzie-Mintz led a team in program innovation and effectiveness, by strengthening program systems guided by strategic cycles of educational transformation and collective inquiry.

Over the course of her career, Yazzie-Mintz’s community-based scholarship has been presented at more than 100 national and international scholarly meetings and symposia; additionally, her research has been published in journals focusing on community-based research impacting Native and non-Native early childhood, K-12, and higher education.

Yazzie-Mintz’s recognition as a national scholar of education earns her the honor to serve on national technical advisory and review committees informing ECE research, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s Early Learning Systems Committee, Advisory Committee for the National Center for Families Learning and the National Indian Education Association’s subcommittee, Native Educators Education and Development.

Yazzie-Mintz, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, earned a Doctor of Education from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education.
Curriculum Vita
Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz, Ed.D.

First Light Education Project, LLC.                       Mailing Address:

Email:  
tyazziemintz@firstlighteducationproject.org
        yazzieta@post.harvard.edu

Phone: (617) 548-0576

Websites:
www.firstlighteducationproject.org
www.collegefund.org/content/restorativeteachings
www.collegefund.org/content/ke-early-childhood-initiative
www.collegefund.org/content/cultivatinglakota
www.collegefund.org/wakanyeja

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

2002 Harvard University Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA
    Ed.D. Learning and Teaching
    Dissertation Title: “Culture deep within us: Culturally appropriate curriculum
    and pedagogy in three Navajo teachers’ work”
    Committee: Eileen de los Reyes (Chair), Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, &
    Karen Gayton Swisher

1996 Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ
    M.Ed. Educational Psychology

1992 Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ
    B.S. Psychology

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

First Light Education Project, Founder & Principal Consultant
Present
Denver, CO

American Indian College Fund, Vice President
Program Initiatives, April 2017-August 31, 2019
Denver, CO
President: Cheryl Crazy Bull

American Indian College Fund, Co-Director
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, March 2016-April 2017
Denver, CO
President: Cheryl Crazy Bull
American Indian College Fund, Senior Program Officer/Principal Investigator
Tribal College and University Early Childhood Education Initiatives, May 2015-April 2017
Denver, CO
President: Cheryl Crazy Bull; Chief Operations Officer: Tamela Miller Carlson

American Indian College Fund, Program Officer/Principal Investigator
Ké’ ECE Initiative, April 2014-May 2015
Denver, CO
VP Office of Sponsored Research and Programs: Dr. Dorothy Aguilera-Black Bear

Indiana University-Bloomington, Assistant Professor
Curriculum and Instruction, School of Education, August 2005-July 2011
Bloomington, IN
Department Chairs: Dr. Cary Buzzelli (2005-2010), Dr. Jesse Goodman (2010-2011)

Indiana University-Bloomington, Affiliated Faculty
American Studies Program, College of Arts and Sciences, September 2007-July 2011
Ph.D. Minor in Native American & Indigenous Studies
Bloomington, IN
Director, Dr. Matthew Guterl

Office of Language Learning & Support Services, Data/Research Analyst
Research and Professional Development, Boston Public Schools, June 2003-May 2005
Boston, MA
Executive Director, Ms. Nydia Mendez

Tufts University, Part-time Faculty
Department of Education, January 2002-May 2005
Medford, MA
Department Chair, Dr. Kathleen Weiler

COMPASS, Inc., Educational Consultant
Jamaica Plain, MA, April 1999-July 2003
Director, Dr. John Verre

Harvard Graduate School of Education, Teaching Fellow
Learning and Teaching Department
Harvard University, July 1997-June 2002
Faculty: Dr. de los Reyes, Dr. Boles

Harvard Education Publishing Group
Harvard University, May 1997-May 1999
General Manager, Dr. Karen Maloney

Journal of American Indian Education, Editorial Assistant
Center for Indian Education
Arizona State University, June 1994-May 1996
Center for Indian Education, Graduate Assistant
Arizona State University, August 1993-May 1994

*Other Education Professional Experience*
Kindercare, Toddler Two Teacher, Lynnwood, WA, 1992-1993
Child Study Lab, Research Intern. Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, 1989-1992
Elementary Substitute Teacher, Ganado Unified Public Schools, Ganado, AZ, 1988-1991

**HONORS & ACHIEVEMENTS**
2017, January 6 Presidential Appointee (President Barack Obama), Board of Directors, National Board for Education Sciences.
2016, May 24 Award Recipient, Harvard University Graduate School of Education Alumni Council Award for Outstanding Contribution to Education
2010 Nominee for the AERA Indigenous Peoples of the Americas Special Interest Group Bobby Wright Award for Early Career Contributions to Research in Indigenous Education.
2009 Nominee for Indiana University School of Education Office of Graduate Studies Award for Excellence in Mentoring.
2008, April Award Recipient, Indiana University Trustees Teaching Award 2007-2008, Indiana University.
2006, March 4 Alumni of Color Achievement Award Recipient, Alumni of Color Conference (AOCC), Harvard University Graduate School of Education
1997 DeCuevas Experienced Teacher Award, Harvard University Graduate School of Education.
1996-1998 Greenberg and Greenberg Class of ‘61 Award, Harvard University.
1997-2000 Massachusetts Indian Association Scholarship Award, Massachusetts Indian Association.
1996 Entering Doctoral Award, Harvard University Graduate School of Education.
GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Dollar General, 2019-2020  
Amount: $250,000 (1 year Grant)  
(VP Program Initiatives: GED and Adult Literacy Initiative)  
American Indian College Fund

AT&T, 2018-2020  
Amount: $350,000 (2 year Grant)  
(VP Program Initiatives: Braiding Success Comprehensive Programming)

W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2018-2020  
Amount: $1,500,000 (2 year Grant)  
(VP Program Initiatives/Principal Investigator: For the Wisdom of the Children: Strengthening the Teacher of Color Pipeline)  
American Indian College Fund

Dollar General, 2018-2019  
Amount: $250,000 (1 year Grant)  
(VP Program Initiatives: GED and Adult Literacy Initiative)  
American Indian College Fund

Toyota Motor Company  
Amount: $150,000 (1 time award)  
(VP Program Initiatives: ECE STEM Initiative- Community-based programming)

Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, 2017-2020  
Amount: $1,350,000 (3 year Grant)  
(VP Program Initiatives: Environmental Sustainability)  
American Indian College Fund

Dollar General, 2017-2018  
Amount: $250,000 (1 year Grant)  
(VP Program Initiatives: GED and Adult Literacy Initiative)  
American Indian College Fund

Ford Motor Company, 2017-2018  
Amount: $16,000 (1 year Grant)  
(VP Program Initiatives: Community College Challenge)  
American Indian College Fund

AT&T, 2016-2018  
Amount: $500,000 (2 year Grant)  
(VP Program Initiatives: Tribal College and High School Partnerships)  
American Indian College Fund

W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2016-2018  
Amount: $1,500,000 (2 year Grant)  
(Senior Program Officer/Principal Investigator: Restorative Teachings ECE Initiative)  
American Indian College Fund

Grotto Foundation, 2015-2016  
Amount: $25,000 (1 year Grant)  
(Senior Program Officer/Principal Investigator: Cultivating Lakota Early Learning Opportunities)  
American Indian College Fund

Amount: $500,000 (+$100,000 match)  
(Senior Program Officer/Principal Investigator: K’é ECE Family Engagement Initiative)  
American Indian College Fund
W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2011-2016  
(Senior Program Officer/Principal Investigator: Wakanyeja “Sacred Little Ones” ECE Initiative) 
American Indian College Fund

Amount: $5,000,000 (5 year Grant)

School of Education Diversity Innovation Grant, 2008-2009  
(T. Yazzie-Mintz & J. S. Damico, Co-Principal Investigators) 
Indiana University, School of Education

Amount: $25,000

Faculty Research Support Programs Grant, 2006-2007  
(J. S. Damico, T. Yazzie-Mintz, V. Herrera, S. Carter, & G. Campano) 
Indiana University Office of the Vice Provost for Research

Amount: $32,573

Maris M. and Mary Proffitt Endowment Grant, 2006-2008  
(T. Yazzie-Mintz, Principal Investigator) 
Indiana University School of Education

Amount: $40,000 (2 year Grant)

Maris M. and Mary Proffitt Summer Faculty Fellowship, 2006  
(T. Yazzie-Mintz, Principal Investigator) 
Indiana University School of Education

Amount: $12,000

PUBLICATIONS (*Peer-Reviewed)


Other Scholarly Publications, Monographs, and Reports (*Peer Reviewed)


**INVITED KEYNOTES and RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS**


   Session included the following Tribal College and University faculty:
   Amy Burland, Salish Kootenai College
   Danielle Lansing, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute
   Cheryl LaRose, Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College
   Sara Montgomery, Fond du lac Tribal and Community College

   Invited panelist, Grantmakers for Education Summit on Racial Equity, Dallas, TX.


Yazzie-Mintz, T. (2018, April 23). “No turning back: 100 years continuing the quest for equity in Indigenous early childhood opportunities.” Invited Keynote Address, Brazelton Touchpoints 100 years Celebration, Boston, MA


RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS


   Panel featured the following Tribal College and University faculty:
      Nahrin Aziz-Parsons, Northwest Indian College
      Kimberlee Brent, Ilisaġvik College
      Manda Davis, Salish Kootenai College
      Danielle Lansing, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute
      Cheryl La Rose, Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College
      Yuliya Manyakina, Sitting Bull College
      Cyndi Pyatskowit, College of Menominee Nation


**RESEARCH INITIATIVES**

*For the Wisdom of the Children: Strengthening the Teacher of Color Pipeline*

April 2018 - April 2020

VP for Program Initiatives & Principal Investigator: Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz

Restorative Teachings: A Tribal college and university collaborative to strengthen systems of care and learning with Native families and children.

January 2016 – February 2018

Senior Program Officer & Principal Investigator: Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz

*Cultivating Lakota Early Childhood Learning Opportunities*

April 2015 – October 2016

Senior Program Officer & Principal Investigator: Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz

*Ké ‘ Family Engagement Initiative: Strengthening systems of shared responsibility among families, schools, and communities*

April 2014 – September 2015

Senior Program Officer & Principal Investigator: Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz

*Wakanyeja “Sacred Little Ones” Tribal College Readiness and Success by Third Grade Initiative*

July 2011 - December 2015

Program Officer & Principal Investigator: Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz

Determinants of Educational Attainment: Longitudinal data set for Indigenous Peoples

January 2007- 2013

Principal Investigators: Randall Akee & Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz
The Influence of Teachers’ Conceptions of Culture and Language on Instruction
Funded in part by: The Maris M. Proffitt & Mary Higgins Proffitt Endowment Grant and The Maris M. Proffitt & Mary Higgins Proffitt Endowment Faculty Summer Fellowship
May 2006 - 2011
Principal Investigator: Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz

A multilayered approach to a complex problem: Deepening pedagogical, conceptual, and institutional understandings about diversity with web-based tools.
July 2008 -2010
Funded by School of Education Diversity Innovation Grant
Principal Investigators: Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz & James Damico

Improving Quantitative Literacy with a web-based teaching and research tool
January 2007- 2009
Funded by IU Faculty Research Support Program Grant
Principal Investigators: James Damico, Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz, Veronica Herrera, Stephanie Carter, & Gerald Campano

Office of Language Learning & Support Services – Research & Program Development
Boston Public Schools – The Use of Data to Inform Instruction of English Language Learners
June 2003 - June 2005
Project Manager: Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz

Office of Language Learning & Support Services – Research and Program Development
Boston Public Schools – Implementation of Question 2 “English-Only Instruction”
June 2003 - June 2005
Project Manager: Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz

TEACHING

University Courses:

- S400/S500: Community of Teachers Seminar, School of Education, Indiana University
  (Undergraduate/Graduate Course in the Teacher Education Program)
- J500: Curriculum in the Context of Instruction, School of Education, Indiana University
  (Graduate Course in Curriculum and Instruction)
- E351: Foundations in Early Childhood Education, School of Education, Indiana University
  (Undergraduate Course in the Teacher Education Program)
- E300/M300: Elementary/Secondary Education for a Pluralistic Society, School of Education,
  Indiana University (Undergraduate Course in the Teacher Education Program)
- J760: Cultural Research in Indigenous Educational Communities, School of Education,
  Indiana University (Doctoral Special Topics Seminar: Curriculum and Instruction)
- J760: Readings in Critical Theory, School of Education, Indiana University (Doctoral Special
  Topics Seminar: Curriculum and Instruction)
- S501: Secondary School Curriculum, School of Education, Indiana University (Masters
  Course: School of Education)
- J762: Curriculum, Ideology and Action, School of Education, Indiana University (Doctoral
  Special Topics Seminar: Curriculum and Instruction)
Courses taught prior to Indiana University

- Sociology of the School, Department of Education, Tufts University (Graduate Course)
- Reflective Pedagogy for Social and Political Change, Center for Peaceable Schools, Lesley University, Cambridge, MA (Graduate Course)

Teaching Fellow for the following courses

- Education for Social and Political Change, Harvard Graduate School of Education
- Teachers, Leadership and Power: School Reform from the Classroom, Harvard Graduate School of Education
- The Socio-historical Context and the Issues of Diversity in American Schooling, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Doctoral Dissertation Committees

- Indiana University-Bloomington, Bloomington, IN
  - 8 doctoral students (2005-2012)
- Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA
  - 1 doctoral student (2011)
- Northwestern University, Evanston, IL
  - 1 doctoral student (2013)

LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

National/International

Committee Member, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Early Learning Systems Committee, June 2019 – Present.

Advisory Board Member, National Families Learning Center, January 2019 – Present.

Committee Member, National Indian Education Association – subcommittee: Native Educators Education and Development (NEED), April 2018 – Present.

2017 Presidential Appointee (President Barack Obama), Board of Directors, National Board for Education Sciences, January 2017- Present.

Member of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Workgroup on DAP and Diversity and Equity, September 2017- Present.


Strategic Partner Contributor, Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies Program Evaluation and Strategic Partner Workgroup, August 2017-August 2019.


Steering Committee Member, Tribal Early Childhood Research Center, University of Colorado - Denver, January 2011 – January 2018.

Editorial Board Member, Curriculum Inquiry, January 2015- January 2018.


Planning Committee Member & Host, American Educational Research Association – Special Interest Groups IPA/IPP Pre-Conference, Washington, D.C. April 7, 2016.


Member of the Research Advisory/Steering Committee, American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Research Center, University of Denver and University of Oklahoma, November 2008 – 2011.


Chair, AERA Division B: Curriculum Studies Book Award Committee, American Educational Research Association, April 2006 –2007.


Editorial Board Member, ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 2001- 2003.


Committee Member, 150 years of Chicano/a Education Conference, co-sponsored by the Harvard Educational Review and University of California - Irvine, Irvine, CA, April 1998.

Conference Chair (97-98) & Planning Committee Member, American Indian and Alaska Native Annual Professors Conference, Haskell Indian Nations University, 1993-1998.

**Indiana University – Bloomington**

Member, Committee on Native American and Indigenous Studies: Native Studies Minor Ph.D. Program, American Studies, College of the Arts and Sciences, Indiana University, January 2008 - July 2011.

Advisory Committee Representative, American Studies Advisory Committee, American Studies Program, Indiana University, 2008 - 2010.

Search Committee Member: Director of the First Nations Cultural and Education Center, Office of the VP for Diversity, Equity and Multicultural Affairs, Indiana University, August 2009 - December 2009.

Proposal Reviewer, IU President’s University Diversity Initiative, Office of the VP for Diversity, Equity, and Multicultural Affairs, Indiana University, November - December 2008.


**School of Education and Curriculum & Instruction – Indiana University**


Co-Area Coordinator of E 300 and M 300 Courses, *Education for a Pluralistic Society*. Curriculum and Instruction, School of Education, Indiana University, Fall 2009 – July 2011.

Nomination and Election Committee - Policy Council, School of Education, Indiana University, February 2008.

Annual Review Committee, Curriculum and Instruction, School of Education, Indiana University, January 2008.


Committee Member, Diversity Committee, School of Education, Indiana University, October 2007 – June 2008.

Dissertation Award Committee Member, Curriculum and Instruction, School of Education, Indiana University, February 2007.

Committee Member, Policy Council, School of Education, Indiana University, July 2007 – 2008.

Committee Member, Undergraduate Scholarship Committee, Office of Teacher Education, School of Education, Indiana University, September 2006 – 2008.

Alternate Member, Policy Council Committee, School of Education, Indiana University, September 2006 – July 2007.
Featured Speaker, Annual Call to Teach, “Call to Teach: Honoring the Profession,” Office of Teacher Education, School of Education, Indiana University, November 11, 2006.

**Northwest Indian College**
Speaker, Early Childhood Teacher Program Event, Early Childhood A.A. Program, Northwest Indian College, May 14, 2013.

**Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute**
Speaker, Early Childhood Pre-Service Teacher Kick-off, Early Childhood A.A. Program, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, September 11, 2013.

**PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**
American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC)
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
   Early Learning Systems Committee
   Diversity and Equity Statement Workgroup
   Developmentally Appropriate Practice Workgroup
National Indian Education Association (NIEA)
   Native Educator Education and Development, Subcommittee
Native Children’s Research Exchange (NCRE)
Select Published Works


Press Releases/News Articles
(see selected links below)

- Alaskan News: Native village youth and education news (2011)
  https://www.nativevillage.org/Archives/2011%20Archives/SEPT%202011%20News/Navajo%20Continues%20Work%20with%20AICF.htm

- Harvard Graduate School of Education Alumni Award (2016), press releases -Available online:
  https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/16/05/yazzie-mintz-receive-alumni-council-award

- Presidential (Obama) Nomination (2017): College Fund press release and White House Press – Available online:
  https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/05/president-obama-announces-more-key-administration-posts


- WK Kellogg Foundation Article: “Sacred Little Ones” infuses Native language and culture into early childhood education (n.d.)

**Includes photos and video**
Websites, Videos, and Social Media Citations

“Sacred Little Ones” infuses Native language and culture into early childhood education

Wakanyeja “Sacred Little Ones” – Tribal College Readiness and Success by Third Grade (2011-2016)
https://collegefund.org/research-and-programs/early-childhood-education/wakanyeja/
   *Site includes photos, description and video shorts and associated social media feeds

Wakanyeja “Sacred Little Ones” (2014)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvKXQyAjSzo

Ké’ Early Childhood Initiative: Strengthening systems of shared responsibility with families, schools and communities
   *Site includes photos, description and video shorts and associated social media feeds

Cultivating Lakota Early Childhood Learning Opportunities
   *Site includes photos, description and video shorts and associated social media feeds

Restorative Teachings Early Childhood Initiative
   *Site includes photos, description and video shorts and associated social media feeds

For the Wisdom of the Children: Strengthening the Teacher of Color Pipeline
FLDC (The Family Leadership Design Collaborative)

“Leveraging Family and Community Expertise to Strengthen Native Early Childhood Education”

Featured Presentations

1) Ethnography Forum 2015 Practitioner Day: Communities of Inquiry Symposium

“Drawing upon places of strength and knowing: Wakanyeja communities of inquiry strengthen early childhood learning opportunities with native children and families”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzsf_UcIs4Q&feature=youtu.be

This video features the co-presentation of the work of Sacred Little Ones, with the Northwest Indian College team.

2) Ethnography Forum 2019 Plenary Keynote Talk (YouTube)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RGf_v8RJrQ

"On the Other Side of Invisibility: Community-Based Inquiry from within Indigenous Educational Contexts"

In this talk, Dr. Yazzie-Mintz examines a longstanding notion that Natives are invisible. On the other side of invisibility are vibrant Indigenous communities of educational practitioners engaged in collective inquiry to transform Native education from within tribal communities. But what is invisibility? Invisibility is how Native people, Native communities, and Native research are seen when looking from the mainstream—borne from the onslaught of research studies that include “insignificant” numbers of Native participants; the pervasive myths of Native communities as lost in the past; the co-optation of arts, science, literature, education, and inquiry in Native communities by non-Native artists, scientists, writers, educators, and researchers. However, going straight into what looks like a great void, from the mainstream side, gets us to the other side of invisibility. Reframing the inquiry stance from within tribal communities opens up the possibilities of seeing and understanding all the ways in which Indigenous and tribal communities are vibrant and empowered to address historical inequities, including invisibility. Standing on the other side of invisibility, we witness Native teachers, parents, community members, and their early learning partners engage in innovations in culture-based education and community transformation. These highly visible communities contribute knowledge from research and practice within early learning environments across Native communities—knowledge that strengthens early learning for all children.

3) 2019 Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education Spring Raines Colloquium, Michigan State University

“Grounded in Place and Purpose; Tribal Colleges and Universities as Places of Indigenous Learning and Restorative Practices”

Additional Evidence of Impact

1) In 2015, Dr. Yazzie-Mintz participated at the Congressional Baby Caucus Briefing (“Creating a Path for our Children: Early learning in Native Communities”) on American Indian and Alaska Native Communities, along with representatives of the Tribal Home Visiting and Tribal Early Learning Initiative programs from across the country. Dr. Yazzie-Mintz joined this briefing on behalf of the Wakanyeja “Sacred Little Ones” and K’è’ Early Childhood Initiatives at the American Indian College Fund. During this briefing, Dr. Yazzie-Mintz discussed “innovative efforts at Tribal Colleges and Universities to leverage tribal resources to strengthen systems of care of young children in tribal communities- including pathways to teacher training, engaging families in children’s education, supporting early literacy, and integrating Native language and culture” (excerpted from December 14, 2015 newsletter distributed by the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development” - https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/december_2015_ecd_newsletter.pdf

2) Partners in the K’è’ Early Childhood Initiative commit to upholding the following “experiential truths”: “parents as assets”; “historical understanding” of parents’ educational experiences; “realistic funding” required to implement and sustain this initiative; “family engagement”; “intergenerational participation”; “respecting family demands”; “inclusive communication”; understanding of and commitment to the “rules of the game”; “community-led frameworks”; “tech accessibility”; and “educational sovereignty”.

3) 2015 Overview and Impact Statement  - see attachment

4) 2017 Overview and Impact Statement – see attachment

5) 2019 Program Initiatives Infographic – see attachment
ECE Programming Across Tribal Colleges & Universities (TCUs)

- TCUs served 19,326 students and 91,984 additional community members in AY 2011-2012.
- AY 2013-2014 23 of the 37 TCUs have a program in Early Childhood Education, or similar degree program
  - AY 2013-2014 Associates Degrees Programs: 24
  - AY 2013-2014 Bachelor’s Degrees Programs: 6
- 2 TCUs current have reported capacity to offer distance learning for part of their ECE program: Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute and United Tribes Technical College
- 1 TCU offers a Master’s Degree in the area of Early Childhood Education, specialization in Special Ed

American Indian College Fund Early Childhood Education Initiatives: Wakanyeja and Ké’ ECE Initiatives

Wakanyeja “Sacred Little Ones” Early Childhood Education

- $5 Million, five-year initiative funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- 4 Grantees: Ilisagvik College, College of Menominee Nation, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, and Northwest Indian College

Ké’ Early Childhood Initiative

- $500,000, 18 month initiative funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (plus $100,000 matching funds)
- 4 Grantees: Sitting Bull College, College of Menominee, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, and Northwest Indian College

Program Findings and Impact 2011-2013

Fostering Families with Young Children

| 331 Total families served |
| 326 Total children served |
| 18 local partners engaged |
| 10 regional partners engaged |
| 11 national partners engaged |

Percentage of families across four sites at or below poverty line: 80-100%

29 tribal nations served

Family Engagement:

195 parents participated in activities & trainings
43 parents are enrolled TCU students at a TCU

Types of Family Engagement

- Chaperone field trips
- Parents visit classroom
- Encourage reading to their children
- Collecting & analyzing developmental assessment data with teachers
- Developing & supporting implementing culture-based curriculum

Numbers of Teachers Trained

| 2011-2012 | . . . . . . . . | 226 |
| 2013 | . . . . . . . . | 145 |
In 2013, the Wakanyeja ECE Initiative: Launched 5 Websites Collectively Reaching Over 300 Viewers Each Month!

American Indian College Fund main webpages for our ECE Initiatives:
http://www.collegefund.org/content/wakanyeja

Grantee Sites: Ilisagvik, College of Menominee, SIPI, and Northwest Indian College:
http://www.sacredlittleones-ilisagvik.org/
http://www.cmnsacredlittleones.com/
http://sacredlittleones-sipi.org/
http://www.sacredlittleones-nwic.org/

Adoption of Programming and Processes

The Wakanyeja ECE Initiative Grantees have developed programming, addressing diverse areas of work to inform other tribal colleges on teacher education:

- Envisioning and launching a new early childhood education program
- Engagement in self-study of institutional change to strengthen existing teacher education programming, practicum, scope and sequence of course work, and “Indigenizing” the early childhood teacher education
- Development of empowered early childhood student-teachers and teachers in the areas of family engagement, culturally-based curriculum development, documentation of children's development, participation in collective inquiry, and leadership advancement

Institutional Impact: Transformation

“The Wakanyeja “Sacred Little Ones” Project has positively impacted the College in a number of ways. First, it has impacted the quality of the Early Childhood Education A.A. degree program by drawing upon high quality faculty and staff [who contribute] to the program; individuals who not only have extensive experience from the field but who can turn around and contribute back to the advancement of the profession.”

– VP Academic Affairs (SIPI Annual Report, 2014)
Tribal College and University Early Childhood Education Initiatives

The American Indian College Fund (College Fund), in collaboration with Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), engages in early childhood education (ECE) initiatives that draw upon child development knowledge from within Native communities melded with the best practices identified in the field of early childhood education. The College Fund’s community-based TCU ECE initiatives employ a collective strategy for educational change, growing long-term commitment and shared responsibility for the development of high-quality early childhood educational opportunities for Native children and their families. This is done through the development of culturally-responsive and adapted ECE systems, building stronger investments in strategic health and wellness, and supporting Native family economic security directly through partnerships and access to higher education and educational equity.

To address the critical needs of vulnerable populations, our theory of change prioritizes strengthening family, teachers, and community engagement in areas such as health and wellness, economic security, and culturally-based education in order to strengthen birth-to-career pathways that we believe can lead to racial equity.

The College Fund TCU ECE Initiatives are guided by a framework focused on five domains of work:
1) Family engagement and empowerment at the earliest levels of education;
2) Teacher quality;
3) Documenting cognitive and non-cognitive development skills;
4) Increasing opportunities to strengthen Pre-K to K-3 transitions, so that Native children are ready for school;
5) Incorporation of Native culture and language in teaching, learning, and assessment practices.

Success of the programming in ECE also draws heavily upon strategic partnerships with national groups, including the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Brazelton Touchpoints Center. Access to and partnerships with these national and international organizations, institutions of higher education such as the Yale Child Study Center, and professional networks in Native education and early childhood education, support the success of the programming, training, and funded projects implemented by the tribal college grantee institutions. All TCU ECE tribal college grantee teams have additional access to resources beyond the financial supports provided.
The larger impact of the College Fund’s TCU ECE Initiatives emerge from restorative acts, emphasizing early childhood development from within tribal communities; increased engagement of families and communities; upgrading teacher education programs with an expanded investment in areas of health disparities and families and children with special needs; and supporting economic security. The work to improve culturally-based early childhood curriculum includes alignment of Native-based curriculum with early learning guidelines and expansion of knowledge related to documenting children’s development in tribal-specific contexts. The investment in high quality teachers, family engagement, and community efforts increases strategic potential of systemic advocacy for education and economic equity. Native children’s well-being and lifelong opportunities are the driving force behind the ambitious goals we have set for our collective, community-based program.

**Organizational Background**
The American Indian College Fund (College Fund) is a national not-for-profit organization established in 1989. The College Fund is recognized as a premier organization impacting early childhood education and has benefited from increased opportunities to contribute to national dialogue on Native early childhood education.

The College Fund implemented four major funded initiatives: *Wakanyeja “Sacred Little Ones”, Ké’ Family Engagement, Cultivating Lakota Early Learning Opportunities,* and *Restorative Teachings.* The College Fund has leveraged the success of these ECE initiatives, awarding funding opportunities in the total amount of $7.25 million dollars across seven TCUs located in: Alaska, Michigan, New Mexico, North Dakota, Montana, Washington, and Wisconsin.
The Early Childhood Education initiatives are directed by nationally recognized educator and scholar, Dr. Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz. Yazzie-Mintz stewards the early childhood education programming at the College Fund to national visibility, building upon collaborative inquiry, authentic engagement of Native families and communities, and focus on long-term sustainable educational programming and practices. Under her leadership, the TCU ECE Initiatives continue to grow and increasingly are reaching more TCUs, teachers, children, families, and communities.

**American Indian College Fund TCU ECE Initiatives Accomplishments**

- Launched the first early childhood center in Barrow, Alaska serving rural Inupiat children.
- TCUs and their partners are developing systems to collect data on child developmental milestones, teacher knowledge, and family engagement.
- Over 1,815 families have participated in grant related activities across grantee sites.
- Over 988 teachers have participated in TCU ECE Initiatives and training.
- Over 40 literacy kits have been distributed to local early childhood centers serving Native children.
- Over 3,330 children have been impacted by the project through teacher training, funded activities, conference workshops, and on-going early childhood initiatives.
- Over 1,000 early childhood educators and tribal leaders concerned about early childhood educational opportunities have been reached through numerous local, regional, and national conference presentations.
- Websites, films, social media and other knowledge products are publicly available to inform teacher education, community-based programming and cross-site learning. [http://collegefund.org/research-and-programs/](http://collegefund.org/research-and-programs/)

**Technical Assistance Provided by the College Fund to the Tribal College Grantees**

- Development of project goals with TCU mission, outreach, and degree program goals.
- Alignment of multiple grant initiatives, to achieve balanced approach and resources across multiple funded programs.
- Development of project alignment with early learning guidelines, particularly in health and wellness curriculum for early learning center.
- Review of curriculum enhancements and course revisions for teacher education degree programs.
- Facilitation of research inquiry process and assistance in selection and implementation of research methodology.
- Review of research manuscripts developed by project directors for national conference presentations and publication.
♦ Review and development of language revitalization programming and outreach for strategic partners in the field.
♦ Strategic guidance to teams on cycles of educational change.
♦ Provided strategies for development of authentic assessments for child development, family engagement, program improvements, teacher engagement, and health and wellness.

**Parent Testimonials**

**Lumni Mother:**

“….for our kids to go learn about our culture of drum making or the smoking of the salmon or drum bag making. With every Family Fun Night, it’s always something to do with culture. So if we didn’t have this, then how are we supposed to teach our kids about culture? Especially if we don’t have those elders to come back to teach these kids. With [Ké’ Initiative] they’re making it possible to do that.”

**Parents at Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute Youth Development Inc. Head Start:**

“As both of us are full time college students, we think it’s important to surround our son with positive, healthy, and educational settings. With this kind of atmosphere, he will become accustomed to these places, and it will be normal for him. For us, college was a huge step, but for him we want it to be second nature. By being surrounded with positive people and places, our son’s world will be filled with ambition, goals, role-models, and a bright future. We want all parents to take their children to positive places you would like them to be someday. This way the seed can be planted for a healthy future.”

**Examples of Continued Areas of Need**

♦ Expansion of TCU ECE Initiatives to additional TCUs
♦ Community based projects and educational engagement
♦ Teacher training
♦ Language and culture revitalization programming
♦ Development and publication of curriculum
♦ Natural play-scapes for children at TCU early learning centers
♦ Convenings to share best practices
♦ Ongoing and increased technical assistance to community based programs
For the Wisdom of the Children ECE Initiative seeks to impact Native early childhood education by strengthening and increasing STEM early learning opportunities, starting with opportunities for teachers, and extending to opportunities for families and communities, for children, and for early learning centers.
Wakanyeja “Sacred Little Ones” ECE Initiative

Change Levers Impacting Native Children Ready for School and Success by Third Grade

- Formal/Informal Systems Alignment
- Effective Teaching
- Family Engagement

School Readiness
Success by Third Grade
Wakanyeja “Sacred Little Ones” ECE Initiative

Our funded project aligns with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s two major goals: Kids Ready for School and Success by Third Grade via 3 main change levers. The Wakanyeja “Sacred Little Ones” program engages the following change levers/strategies:

- **Family Engagement**
  - Empower families and communities to engage in their children’s education through a number of venues, such as literacy nights, college courses, curriculum development, and inquiry projects
  - Train teachers to work effectively with parents as partners in curriculum development and advocacy for quality education
  - Increase parent and community knowledge in child development through tuition free college education at tribal college campuses
  - Increase parent knowledge about curriculum and assessment by engaging them in curriculum development inquiry projects and data analysis
  - Prepare parents for pre-K to K-3 transition

- **Effective Teaching**
  - Improve teacher quality by establishing new Associate degree programs in early childhood education and strengthening existing teacher education programs
  - Increasing teacher knowledge about child development – in particular engaging in discussions about Native perspectives of child development
  - Tribal colleges partner with local schools and early childhood centers to offer professional development opportunities
  - Partnerships with local schools and early learning centers to provide practicum experience for developing teachers and practicing teachers

- **Formal and Informal Systems Alignment**
  - We support the alignment of formal schooling structures with informal systems of learning provided in families
  - We support access to quality education for young children by supporting opportunities to foster knowledge growth about child development among practicing teachers, pre-service teachers, tribal college faculty (and administration) and parents.
  - Integration of Native language and culture is implemented through alignment of systems of knowledge – elders in the communities, fluent speakers of Native languages (includes parents), tribal college programming, and certified teachers in schools and centers.
Dear Professor Faircloth,

I am writing this letter in support of Dr. Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz’s nomination for the Brock Prize in Education Innovation. I have known Dr. Yazzie-Mintz for over 19 years, and I cannot recommend her more highly for this esteemed award. She brings unique talents and perspectives to all of her work – but in particular to her work on early childhood programs and research for Native Americans. I have witnessed first-hand Dr. Yazzie-Mintz’s practical, collaborative, and consultative efforts and work in the area of Native education. I believe that her dedication and contributions to the field make her a very strong candidate for the Brock Prize.

Dr. Yazzie-Mintz has embarked upon an important research and policy agenda during her time at the American Indian College Fund (AICF). In research from fields as wide as developmental psychology and economics (in addition to education), there is an emerging consensus on the impact of early intervention on children’s educational outcomes. In this regard, Dr. Yazzie-Mintz has supported the development of early-education programs for some of the most vulnerable populations – American Indian and Alaska Native children. In her role as the Principal Investigator for Wakanyeja “Sacred Little Ones” Early Childhood Education Initiative, she has convened several large gatherings of native educators, students and program providers across the country. These meetings and technical assistance workshops have been instrumental in increasing the ability of early childhood education programs to mobilize myriad stakeholders, build the capacity of program staff, and effectively deliver curriculum.

My work with Dr. Yazzie-Mintz focuses on obstacles to education for native peoples. In the past we have collaborated on identifying obstacles to the pursuit of higher education (both college and post-graduate) for native peoples in the US. After designing and administering our survey, we identified several areas for concern; native students reported the need to care for family as one important reason that they delay or stop their college educations. In more recent work we have used existing nationally-representative datasets such as the ECLS-B to examine how native children differ in early childhood with regard to parental inputs. Our analysis focuses on family engagement with young children (0-7). We find, contrary to conventional wisdom, that there is strong evidence for parental participation in activities with their young children. We
completed one paper using this data and expect to be able to explore this topic in several other directions in the future.

I am an applied economist and I broadly study economic and social development for native peoples in the US (American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians). Dr. Yazzie-Mintz and I have been able to collaborate on research that intersects both of our respective disciplines. As a result, our work is better able to speak to the nuanced outcomes, experiences and potential obstacles for these research populations. The combination of our use of nationally-representative data with sufficiently large numbers of native peoples and cutting-edge early childhood education theory (and practice) has certainly improved the quality of my work and efforts in this area. Dr. Yazzie-Mintz and I have created a research agenda that is unique among those working in the American Indian education and economic development fields. We have a unique merging of quantitative and qualitative research approaches that produces novel research outputs.

I view the development of Dr. Yazzie-Mintz’s research agenda as a natural progression of her experience and interests. She has worked in a variety of institutions subsequent to her graduation from her doctoral program. Most recently, Tarajean’s leadership role at the American Indian College Fund with the Wakanyeja “Sacred Little Ones” Early Childhood Education Initiative has provided her a unique opportunity to shape and support educational practices and programs. I believe that she will have a wealth of research opportunities and activities in the future related to the work that she helped to foster while at the AICF. I am looking forward to working with her on these future endeavors. We have only begun to scratch the surface of understanding what drives the effectiveness and success of these early education programs for native populations. Tarajean’s interest in the cultural and language integration in teacher curriculum will serve as an important area of future investigation here as well. As the program director, she has insights that will serve her own research efforts as well as those of her students in the future.

I can also speak to Dr. Yazzie-Mintz’s abilities as a mentor for students. I have invited Tarajean to present at two events at UCLA in the past few years. In our Good Native Governance conference, Dr. Yazzie-Mintz presented her work and its relation to tribal governance and programming on our education panel. We also invited Dr. Yazzie-Mintz to a later event to provide an overview talk to native graduate students at UCLA. Both events were a huge success and as a result several important collaborative research connections were made between UCLA graduate students and the AICF. Dr. Yazzie-Mintz continues to mentor and meet with several of those graduate students. In fact, several of our UCLA graduate students have been asked to conduct work for the AICF as a result of those meetings.

Finally, Dr. Yazzie-Mintz has an ever-growing national profile in American Indian education. She has been a leader at AERA as chairperson of the association’s Indigenous Peoples of the Americas Special Interest Group, and she serves as an on-going technical reviewer for the National Indian Education Study conducted by the US Department of Education. Most recently, Dr. Yazzie-Mintz was appointed to the National Board for Educational Sciences. Dr. Yazzie-Mintz is becoming recognized for her contributions to American Indian education and research; she was most recently awarded by the Harvard University Graduate School of Education Alumni Council for her Outstanding Contribution to Education. Dr. Yazzie-Mintz has also served as an editor for a number of prestigious and influential journals such as the Journal of American Indian Education, Curriculum Inquiry, and Tribal College and University Research Journal. I can only see this national profile increasing even more in the future given her commitment and
dedication to her research, teaching, mentoring and advocacy.

Should you have any further questions, I am happy to elaborate further on these topics by phone or email. I may be reached at 781-502-8894 or by email at rakee@ucla.edu.

Sincerely,

Randall Akee, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Public Policy and
American Indian Studies
September 3, 2019

Dear Dr. Faircloth,

It is an honor to submit a testimonial illustrating the indelible impact that Dr. Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz has made, and continues to make, on enhancing Indigenous education across Indian Country. Over the past six years I have had the great pleasure of working with and learning from Dr. Yazzie-Mintz in my role serving as one of the Project Directors of the early childhood education initiatives she oversees at the American Indian College Fund. During this time, I have witnessed Dr. Yazzie-Mintz’s interactions with colleagues, Native teacher candidates at Tribal Colleges and Universities, and national partners who help to generously fund our movement to strengthen systems of early care and education in Native communities.

Dr. Yazzie-Mintz truly exemplifies the Indigenous values with which she has been raised. She demonstrates leadership by taking an asset-oriented approach in supporting Tribal Nations to improve the quality of teaching and learning for current and future generations in their respective communities. When working with diverse teams from various institutions of higher education, Dr. Yazzie-Mintz underscores the importance of relationality, promotes reciprocal dialogue, and encourages engagement in collective inquiry in order to find innovative and sustainable solutions to any obstacles or barriers in our communities.

Dr. Yazzie-Mintz also leads teams in submitting manuscripts to academic journals and in making presentations at local, regional, national, and international conferences, thus supporting the dissemination of research that informs the greater early learning field of evidence-based practices taking place in Tribal Nations. For the past several years she has co-hosted the Tribal and Indigenous Early Childhood Network (TIECN) at the National Association for the Education of Young Children annual conference (NAEYC), creating space for scholars and practitioners to discuss promising practices in Indigenous education. Such publications and presentations give representatives of early childhood education programs and initiatives in Tribal communities the opportunity to share ways in which they are advancing Native teacher preparation as well as increasing children and families’ engagement in high-quality education.

Dr. Yazzie-Mintz’s unwavering commitment to enhancing education, especially in Native communities, guides and inspires individuals as they follow her example to bolster transformational systems of teaching and learning. She helps to create dynamic leaders and ardent educators who work collectively to effect systemic change throughout Tribal Nations in support of their youngest citizens and sacred little ones. I therefore strongly recommend awarding Dr. Yazzie-Mintz the Brock International Prize in Education.

Sincerely,

Nahrin Aziz-Parsons, M.Ed.
Program Lead, Associate of Applied-Science Transfer in Early Childhood Education Degree
Project Director, Northwest Indian College Early Childhood Education Initiatives
August 31, 2019

Dear Brock Prize Reviewers:

I am honored to share this statement about the vision and contributions of Tarajeann Yazzie-Mintz, a nominee for the Brock Prize. I met Tarajeann when she was leading the selection of the participating tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) in the American Indian College Fund’s (College Fund) early childhood education (ECE) initiative, Wakanyeja (Lakota for Sacred Little Ones). Tarajeann had made the decision to leave the academy to work in the field serving as the director of the early childhood initiative and later in other administrative roles at the College Fund. In 2012, I left my position as President of Northwest Indian College to serve as the President and CEO of the American Indian College Fund. I’ve worked closely with Tarajeann throughout my tenure and for most of her eight plus years at the College Fund.

Tarajeann’s vision for indigenous early childhood education is rooted in her own deeply held belief that Native parents and families can organize and engage in what is best for their children and to experience culturally rooted, place-based education for young children. This belief is complemented by Tarajeann’s experience but actually emerges from her identity as a Native woman and educator. In our tribal communities, we appreciate that the Creator gives gifts of wisdom and compassion and I recognize that Tarajeann is one of those individuals.

Tarajeann is always able to bring out the best with the grassroots people she works with and does so by creating a balance among community and cultural resources, practitioners, and experts. Her high expectations combined with her ability to guide and influence set all the TCUs, staff, parents, students, and children, on a path of learning, collaboration, and performance.

Tarajeann’s work with tribal communities and early childhood education is global - both in the context of the diversity of tribal communities and TCUs and in the contribution to understanding ECE in an indigenous, place-based, predominately rural framework. Tarajeann brought her understanding of cultural constructs, relationships, and tribal teaching and learning to the design and implementation of a series of ECE programs designed on a continuum, all inclusive of culture and language and all responsive to contemporary environments. She brought her prior experience including her academic knowledge to her work in communities and with disenfranchised parents and children.
Tarajean empowered the TCU ECE staff in remarkable ways. In my nearly 40 years of experience in the tribally controlled education movement, I've observed that our TCU faculty and staff rarely have the opportunity to share their learning through publications and presentations. Tarajean provided the opportunity and the guidance to TCU team members and to her own staff for sharing and I’ve seen how empowering that is to them. Tarajean did not seek the spotlight, instead she wanted the light to shine on them.

Tarajean’s creation of the five domains from her learning and from her experience with our ECE programming is ground-breaking for both indigenous people and mainstream society. She is particularly skilled at articulating what we have learned and willingly shares with others.

Establishment of the College Fund’s office of sponsored programs is also one of Tarajean’s accomplishments. She also substantially contributed to the College Fund’s research and evaluation capacity. While creating what are standard systems for sponsored programs and research (grant management, financial oversight, reporting, evaluation), Tarajean exceeded her responsibilities by actively promoting the knowledge and skills of her team members. She helped team members discover improved approaches to working with TCUs, build partnerships with national organizations, and showed them how to connect their work to transformative strategies that are community-led. Tarajean’s team created collaborative programming including our women’s leadership program, Indigenous Visionaries, because she was able to facilitate their ability to make connections among their diverse programs, Native arts, sustainability, and ECE. As the College Fund moved into other areas of programming including student success and workforce education, Tarajean expanded her teaching and guiding to include staff across the organization’s departments.

Tarajean is one of those rare individuals who has vision and can prompt, guide, and lead others to connect their own vision toward meaningful outcomes. Many times, she came to me having worked on her own or with team members on the development of visual aids to explain connections, plans, and to demonstrate how to achieve goals.

Throughout her tenure at the College Fund, Tarajean never wavered from her belief in tribal people being able to lead their own work and manage their own resources. Tarajean is a modern-day Native woman warrior, helping us navigate contemporary society while honoring and revitalizing our tribal knowledge and teachings.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Crazy Bull
President & CEO
August 31, 2019

Dear Dr. Faircloth,

It is my honor and pleasure to support Dr. Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz’s nomination for the Brock Prize in Education Innovation. I have known Tarajean for the past 6 years and have watched her leadership, mentoring, and collaboration in action as she has changed the face of early childhood education for thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native children and families across the United States.

Dr. Yazzie-Mintz is an innovative thinker and creator – from her early life on the Navajo Reservation, where she “enrolled” herself in Head Start, she has shown determination and grit. She had a vision for herself at a young age, and she made it happen. Education was important to her family and they supported her as she bloomed in the desert and then as she ventured away from her home community, eventually to Harvard University. It was at Harvard where Tarajean and a group of like-minded friends from all backgrounds formed an advocacy group focused on equity and inclusion that remains to this day.

Dr. Yazzie-Mintz is a visionary – In the last ten years, the importance of early childhood development has become more broadly accepted by the academic, governmental, and philanthropic sectors. Dr. Yazzie-Mintz was there and ready to capitalize on this when she left a professorship to lead a new grant project with the American Indian College Fund (AICF). AICF has historically been a fundraising organization for the Tribal Colleges & Universities (TCU); and Native American higher education is still its main focus. However, because of Tarajean’s big picture thinking about Tribal College students and their children, early childhood education and family engagement now have seats at the table.

Dr. Yazzie-Mintz is a builder – The Wakanyeja Sacred Little Ones Early Childhood Education and the Ké’ Early Childhood Initiatives are the foundational blocks in the growing AICF Early Childhood Project. Dr. Yazzie-Mintz knew that tribal college students often come to a TCU away from their home community with young children. Her vision was that at TCUs, the early childhood departments would partner with AICF and across campuses to develop culturally-based activities for the children and families that would keep them engaged in their children’s development and in their cultural practices, which would keep them enrolled in college. Tarajean’s vision for cultural preservation and practice has become a part of retention and attrition at the TCUs. As is her style, the efforts made today are not shortsighted, but rather part of the river that will flow for generations as Indigenous students feel connections to their own traditions and to other Native peoples as they help their young children grow and learn to walk in two worlds.

Dr. Yazzie-Mintz is a collaborative leader – she developed the Wakanyeja Sacred Little Ones Early Childhood Education and the Ké’ Early Childhood Initiatives in collaboration with several TCUs and other
community and national stakeholder partners. Her leadership style is that of having a clear vision, working side-by-side, and mentoring and coaching at each step along the way. Tarajean mentors by asking the questions that need to be asked. Her background and experience in research, and Indigenous Research Methodologies specifically, give her insights into the lives of the peoples with whom she partners. Her way of being has been extremely successful, but not just economically for AICF. Though the AICF Early Childhood Initiatives have grown exponentially since Dr. Yazzie-Mintz took the helm only a few years ago, the real growth has been in leadership development at the TCUs, where many of the local early childhood department staff members have been promoted or moved on to leadership positions; in the positioning of early childhood development as a part of the overall picture for engagement in Tribal Colleges & Universities; and, most importantly in the lives of thousands of Native children and families.

The legacy of the American Indian Fund’s Early Childhood Education Initiatives that Dr. Yazzie-Mintz fostered is woven from the tales of native children, families, and communities building on their strengths to develop sustainable systems that will lead to lifelong outcomes for all.

Sincerely,

Joelfré L. Grant

Joelfré L. Grant, M.A.T.
Assistant Director for Partnerships & Professional Development
Project Director, Tribal Initiative
Brazelton Touchpoints Center
Boston Children’s Hospital
1295 Boylston Street, Suite 320
Boston, MA 02215
September 4, 2019

Aloha and greetings to the Brock Prize section committee;

I am writing in support of Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz for her nomination to the Brock Prize in education innovation. I have known Tarajean for many years and have been priviledged over the years to work on projects and committees at the national and international level that impact Indigenous communities through education. I can say from the deepest part of my heart that this nomination is fitting and long overdue for Tarajean as a cultural, innovative and visionary leader.

There is a grounded cultural wisdom that exudes from Tarajean’s very presence coupled with her well-established skill set in systemic change and organizational development. She understands the why in the big picture and knows how to work with the what and how in the small details of systemic change through innovative measures that weave culture, community, education and families together towards rebuilding community vibrancy. The Sacred Little Ones is one of her early childhood education initiatives that has impacted those early education years of Native children, families and communities and has served as a national model.

I also serve with Dr. Yazzie-Mintz on a national teacher professional development committee for the National Indian Education Association, an educational association that serves American Indian, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian communities towards the development and improvement of teacher education and professional development of which she has been instrumental in honing in on the issues and once again carving out innovative directions to address this common area of national concern.

I applaud and support this nomination and hope you will also support her selection as this years laureate.

Me ka ‘oia’i’o (sincerely),

Keiki Kawai‘ae‘a
Director, Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikōlani College