



## Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation

Report Prepared for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

Submitted September 2020

Through education, Northwest Indian College promotes Indigenous self-determination and knowledge

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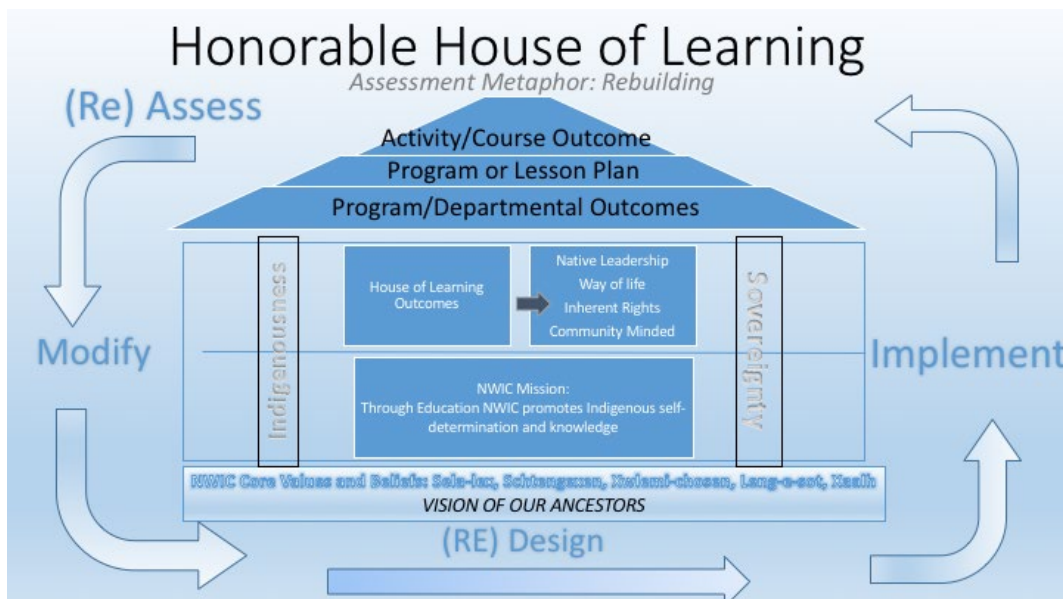
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## Mission Fulfillment

The future of Northwest Indian College (NWIC) is always connected to its past. From the beginning of time – *Nilh tu o*—education has been the method for Indigenous people to access the cultural skills and knowledge necessary to socialize children into the way of life of their people. In recent history, education has been a tool used to colonize and assimilate. For this reason, the founders of NWIC envisioned an education that would revitalize and restore the traditional ways of knowing for students and their communities. The fulfillment of this vision continues today.

In order to support this education of our students, the faculty has actively participated in this effort by developing their own self-knowledge through the [teaching and learning framework](#) focused on self-reflection, learning the context, modeling wellness, action research, and changing approaches to their pedagogy. This transformational process engages faculty within the context of understanding relationality of oneself to place, environment, and people. This personal and professional growth was tracked with a competency based portfolio that demonstrates progression through the teaching and learning framework. During the 2019-2020 academic year this framework was scaled up to include NWIC leadership, administration, and support staff to ensure the support of our students cultural and academic development at all levels of the college.

[Northwest Indian College](#) does an array of continuous accreditation efforts. In line with the college’s assessment framework, we continuously evaluate our efforts to see that they are meaningful, effective, and aligned with our [institutional values and beliefs](#). Since our year one report, we have established a shared understanding of what mission fulfillment means at NWIC, established a Department of Institutional Effectiveness, decided to consolidate our core themes, integrated an Indigenous assessment metaphor into our overall assessment plan and are utilizing comparative data to benchmark student achievement efforts.



In 2018, NWIC established the Department of Institutional Effectiveness. The Department's main functions are to move accreditation efforts forward, provide meaningful data to inform decision-making, execute program evaluations and partner with academic programs to continually improve assessment. In 2019, the Department of Institutional Effectiveness piloted three program cost analyses with the intention of providing NWIC leadership data to inform continuous improvement and inform budget allocations.

In 2019, the NWIC assessment team was reestablished to involve both academic and non-academic program leads, who came together to revise the completed [2012-2017 Assessment Plan](#). The main objective was to reflect the current assessment efforts of faculty and program leads. The current [2018-2024 Assessment Plan](#) illustrates how assessment has evolved to incorporate both formative and summative assessment strategies, as well as a holistic portfolio review of the NWIC general education program. In an effort to move towards mission fulfillment, the Indigenous assessment metaphor was integrated into the overall assessment plan, which grounds assessment efforts in the place-based values and beliefs of NWIC. From this grounding, programs and courses are designed, implemented, and assessed in a continuous cycle of improvement. As this process has evolved, faculty has taken a key leadership role in the revision and final approval of the 2018-2024 assessment plan. In this next assessment cycle, faculty will utilize the continuous improvement model to make changes to the plan itself. The plan will serve as a living document that will essentially grow with the institution. Faculty has also set the goal to utilize the [Indigenous Evaluation Framework \(LaFrance, 2009, 2019\)](#) to create the next institutional assessment plan.

### **Student Achievement**

Northwest Indian College utilizes various student achievement measures and indicators that are used in the decision-making process and to track mission fulfillment. These indicators relate directly to our [Strategic Plan](#) which also serves as our current core themes. On-going reflection occurs throughout analysis of the data to see if we are meeting the objectives. From this analysis and reflection, suggestions for changes and improvements are made. The strategic planning objectives are a main component of our institution's self-reflection. These [objectives and indicators](#) are tracked as many relate to student achievement and success. The data are used to determine our progress and any changes we may be considering as an institution. There are also other indicators that are used within our assessment plan to determine student achievement and success towards fulfilling both program and institutional outcomes. With the approval of the assessment plan in May 2020 (which was primarily created by faculty), there were various indicators of achievement identified. Both formative and summative assessment strategies are used to assess student learning. The types of data used in the assessment of student learning at NWIC are institutional data, direct indicators (measures of student performance), and indirect indicators (student perceptions).

These are some of the indicators related directly to student achievement:

- course completion rates,
- retention rates,
- graduation rates by degree program,

- graduate school enrollment,
- career placement,
- and course assessment narratives.

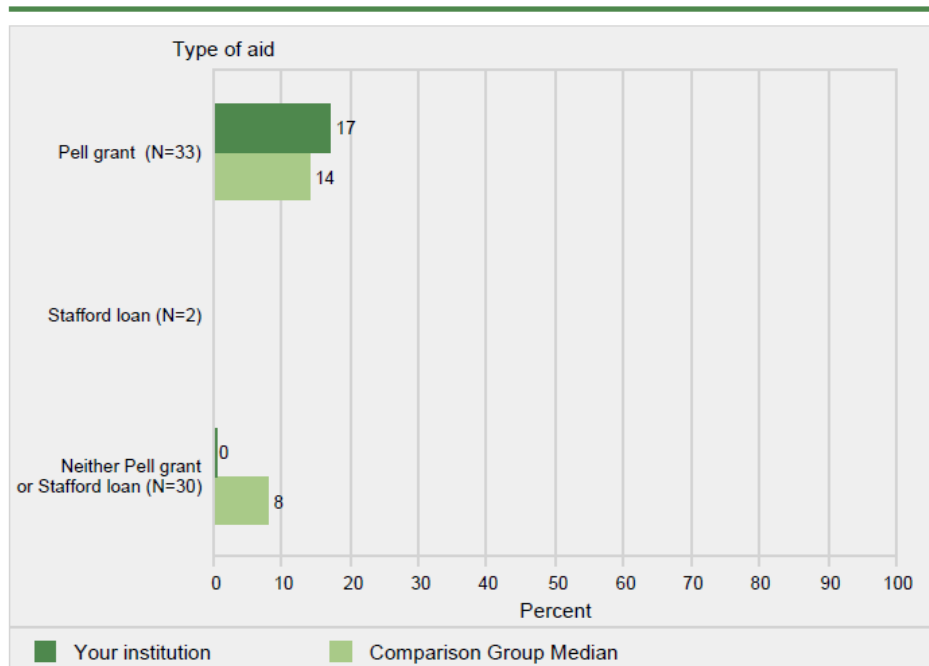
Quantitative measures are used throughout the assessment process and to assess the overall assessment plan. In addition, one key area of focus was the course assessment narrative. This section is where each faculty member can focus on telling the story of student learning. It includes feedback from students as well as teaching methods and strategies.

In order to compare ourselves to other institutions, we primarily use data accessible in both the IPEDS report as well as the [AIMS-AKIS](#) report. The [IPEDS data feedback report](#) is invaluable in comparing ourselves with all Tribal Colleges. This report compares our institution’s data with 33 other Tribal Colleges and Universities. It provides graduation, retention, and completion data. The feedback report we receive each year is distributed to stakeholders and made available on our website.

According to this data, for the last three years NWIC has had a higher graduation rate for Pell grant recipients compared to other TCUs. This is a statistic that the college uses to assess ourselves and ensures we are helping students meet their achievement goals.

Below is data from our most recent IPEDS Feedback Report 2019.

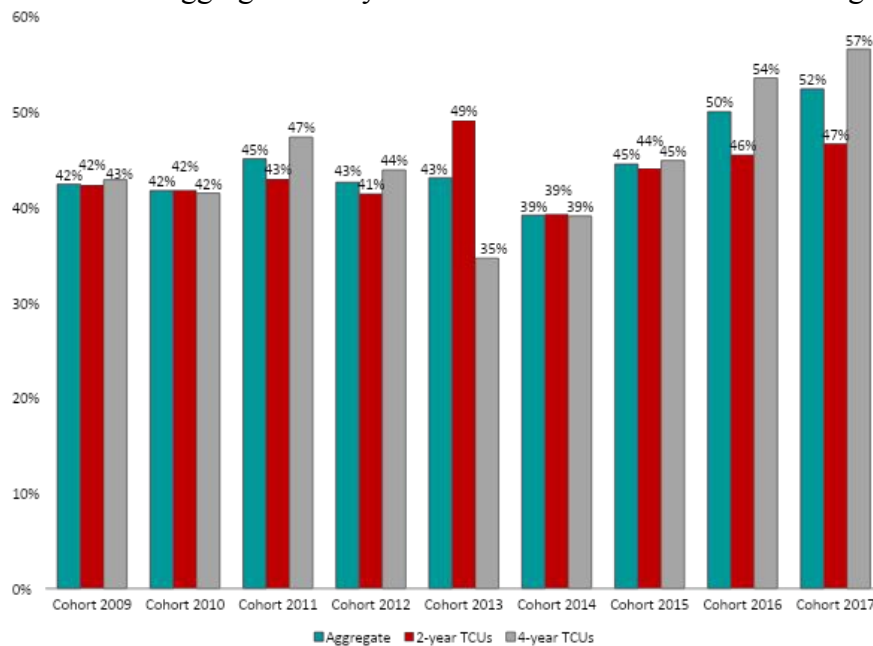
**Figure 11. Graduation rates of full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates within 150% of normal time to program completion, by type of aid: 2012 cohort**



While IPEDS is a data tool we use to track progress and make improvements, there are other methods of tracking data towards making institutional improvements. IPEDS can have limiting factors. Some of our cohorts are fairly small and the data provided is not always statistically significant. For this reason, we use other comparative reports, such as AIMS-AKIS, to track and monitor our institution and to compare with other institutions that serve students with similar demographics.

This data is provided to the American Indian Higher Education Consortium ([AIHEC](#)) each year who breaks down the data into various components that we are constantly monitoring. The data that is submitted includes, but is not limited to: First year retention, completions, first generation students, Pell Grant status, persistence, and post-graduation data. The data submitted is disaggregated by gender and ethnicity (Indian and Non-Indian) for each category. This data is submitted annually to AIHEC.

AIMS AKIS Data also provides us with tools to help us see how we compare with other TCUs. Below is the aggregate first-year retention data for all Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs):



Northwest Indian College falls under the 4-year TCU statistic of 57% in 2017. Our first-year retention for the 2017 year was 56%, which is aligned with the aggregate data. We are continually tracking our retention rate as an institution using comparative and institutional data. In an effort to improve we implemented a [strategic enrollment management plan](#) that has focused on retention efforts as well as recruitment.

Data plays an important role within our institution. We frequently track many data components, review the data and share the data campus wide. Tracking programmatic assessment data has a central role in our institution. This is an area of our institution that has cycled through the continuous improvement model, and we have made great efforts to formalize this process.

A recent Memorandum of Agreement is in progress to work with other Tribal Colleges within the NWCCU community to share data. This will aid us in ensuring our comparative data is meaningful, reflects our institution, and lends itself to telling our unique story. Another opportunity with the data sharing agreement is the ability to share ideas and strategies amongst each other that work towards the goal of improving student achievement outcomes.


## **Programmatic Assessment Bachelor of Science in Native Environmental Science (BSNES)**

The [Bachelor of Science in Native Environmental Science](#) (BSNES) was established in 2009 as the first of the four-year degree programs offered at the college. The decision to launch the BSNES program as the first of the four-year programs was in response to community needs and priorities. The program is based on the Lummi Value and Belief, schtengex<sup>w</sup>en: “We are responsible to protect our territory. This means that we take care of our land and the water and everything that is on and in it.”

As described in NWIC’s 2019-2021 catalog: “The program of study prepares students to grow as community leaders and scholars in Native Environmental Science. The program is designed to develop skills to uphold treaty and inherent rights, through the protection of the natural world. The place-based, experiential and culturally grounded curriculum provides a holistic training in Native Environmental Science, both through Indigenous Research and content knowledge. The program engages with multiple ways of knowing, is grounded in Indigenous Knowledge systems and traditional practice in parallel with new technology and tools for inquiry. Students choose between the Environmental Science Option (ESO) and Interdisciplinary Concentration Option (ICO).” Currently, we offer the BSNES program at five campuses: Lummi, Swinomish, Port Gamble, Nez Perce, and Nisqually. Nisqually is the newest site to offer the program, officially starting in 2018, in response to community demand.

Between 2009-2015, the BSNES faculty primarily assessed two outcomes: communication and ways-of knowing, which were based on the original program outcomes. However, starting in the 2015-2016 academic year, the BSNES program transitioned into assessing courses and capstone projects using our new program outcomes (described below). These outcomes were developed as part of the Indigenous Evaluation Framework (and in collaboration with the Native Studies Leadership Program) and employ the guiding metaphor, the Four Salmon Moons. The decision to revise the BSNES program outcomes was part of our program’s continual improvement and assessment process. The new outcomes are more in line with the college’s new strategic plan, established values, vision, and mission of the college and reflect learning that occurred during the development of NWIC’s three new degree programs: Native Studies Leadership (NSL), Community Advocates and Responsive Education in Human Services (CARE), and Tribal Governance and Business Management (TGBM).



Four Salmon Moons	Program Outcomes
	<p><b>Sense of Place</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Value the interrelationships between people and the environment.</li> <li>· Ground and apply concepts and methodologies to place.</li> </ul> <p><b>Relationality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Demonstrate self-location within inquiry-based research.</li> <li>· Value relationality in the practice of Native Environmental Science.</li> <li>· Evaluate and interpret environmental laws, policies, and acquired rights, and advocate for inherent rights.</li> </ul> <p><b>Inquiry</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Use Indigenous theories and methods to conduct inquiry-based research and evaluation that respond to the needs of Indigenous communities and serve to promote Indigenous self-determination.</li> <li>· Evaluate and use appropriate technologies for inquiry-based research in support of restoration and revitalization of the environment.</li> <li>· Evaluate and apply quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies and concepts that include the synthesis of complex information.</li> </ul> <p><b>Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Communicate using oral, written, and graphical (visual) methods to support Indigenous self-determination.</li> <li>· Communicate effectively to multiple audiences, including Indigenous communities, policy makers, scientific communities, and the general public.</li> </ul>

In parallel with the revised program outcomes, our BSNE program also revised the degree requirements for both the ESO and ICO track. Central to this work was to add the Cultural Sovereignty courses: CSOV 301 (Indigenous Research Theory) and CSOV 302 (Indigenous Research Methods) as required courses for our program. The addition of these courses supports the program outcome, inquiry, and the objective: “Use Indigenous theories and methods to conduct inquiry-based research and evaluation that respond to the needs of Indigenous communities and serve to promote Indigenous self-determination.” Other changes included: increased electives available to students resulting from growing course offerings and increased number of faculty available to teach; the inclusion of biostatistics in both tracks, a critical tool for fisheries management; and a decreased number of required capstone credits from 10 to 5 resulting from additional required methods courses.

## **Programmatic Assessment Associates of Arts and Sciences in General Direct Transfer**

The Associate of Arts and Sciences, General Direct Transfer program is a Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA). This program's original purpose was to support the needs of tribal communities served by NWIC. The program enabled students to complete the first two years of college without leaving home and to ensure transferability of courses to the various colleges and universities in Washington State. Currently, the DTA still serves as a transferable degree program but now NWIC offers four robust baccalaureate programs that the DTA transitions into, allowing our students to still continue their education without leaving their community.

The five NWIC Associate programs build on the Intercollege Relations Commission's (ICRC) Direct Transfer Agreement requirements in general education. The General Direct Transfer program builds directly on the ICRC Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) general education guidelines plus NWIC specific requirements and elective choices. Specifically, the NWIC foundational courses provide a cultural context for our students and at the same time, meets the general education criteria that aligns with the ICRC guidelines. NWIC is committed to providing a quality indigenous education in which every student is able to strengthen their tribal identity and at the same time acquiring the knowledge to transfer to another institution.

### **Program Outcomes**

As described in NWIC's 2019-2021 catalog: "[AAS-DTA Program outcomes](#) are built around five core concepts which align with our institutional mission statement." Upon completion, students will have acquired the following student learning outcomes:

- Acquire a quality education,
- Give back,
- Apply Indigenous knowledge,
- Utilize education through work,
- To organize.

### **Analysis and Reflection**

The General Direct Transfer degree continues to have the highest enrollment and graduation numbers of all academic programs at NWIC. The DTA program serves as an entry point for students and pathway into college. NWIC supports students with their academic pathway. Some first-year students may require adjusting to the academic rigor of college. The First Year Experience (FYE) initiative and developmental education courses are designed to build an academic foundational platform for first-year students to be successful in the college setting.

NWIC's FYE team is comprised of collegial faculty leadership who understands the need for continuous improvement of student learning and is open to culturally relevant place-based pedagogical practices in addition to advisors, TRiO coaches and mentors, and Math and Writing Center tutors. This support begins with learner-centered pedagogy that utilizes a student learning approach in the classroom. NWIC works to identify student strengths and their capacity to excel

academically so, upon graduation, General Direct Transfer students have decided which degree or career to pursue. Graduating students are prepared to continue into one of NWIC's four-year degree programs, transfer to any university in Washington State, or enter the workforce.

The student portfolio was developed to assess general education courses at the two-year program level. This is a newly developed, academic assessment tool designed to determine what students have learned in their general education courses. Faculty also conducts quarterly course evaluations ([assessment narrative](#)) and ongoing course assessments and self-reflections with students throughout the quarter to monitor student progress and academic growth.

These are the components that will be collected in an online portfolio to assess students' completion of the General Direct Transfer degree Program Outcomes:

- An item from a Cultural Sovereignty (CSOV) course.
- An item from History of Federal Indian Policy (POLS 225).
- Final research paper from English Composition II (ENGL 102).
- One item of stand-alone work from College Algebra (Math 102) or Elementary Statistics I (Math 107) that best reflects thinking and communication skills.
- Video of persuasive speech in either Introduction to Communications (CMST 101) or Public Speaking (CMST 220).
- A reflection narrative on any group project or the final group project itself within the identified courses.
- Final project in Biology of Natural History of Place (BIOL 104), Introduction to Geology (GEOL 101) or Fundamentals of Environmental Science (ENVS 108).
- One project from Introduction to Computers (CMPS 101).
- Final Self-Assessment paper from Introduction to Successful Learning (HMDV 110).
- Optional service-learning project.

The portfolio is still an on-going effort under development to assess student learning at the program outcome level. In the next academic year, [assessment rubrics](#) will continue to be developed for the courses contained in the portfolio as well as an overall comprehensive [curriculum map](#) that identifies demonstration of program outcome attainment.

## Moving Forward

As we move forward as an institution, we look at our data and our assessment processes to help us understand, reflect, and plan what our next steps should be. As we move forward to the completion of our current 2018-2024 accreditation plan, we have identified the following institutional priorities, which are but not limited to the following:

1. Consolidating, Strengthening, and the reorganization of our current strategic plan and core themes.
2. Draft plan for implementing an [Indigenous Governance system](#) that is based on the longhouse framework which reflects the college's mission, values and vision.
3. Undergo the [Institutional Transformation Assessment \(ITA\)](#) process and make improvements based on our continuous improvement model.
4. Development of a value-based assessment and evaluation tool for our academic and non-academic programs, which includes our strategic plan.

### Consolidate, Strengthen, and Reorganization of the Strategic Plan and Core Themes

In alignment with our cycle of continuous improvement, the college underwent an evaluation and analysis of our current strategic plan and core themes. Our findings show that the core theme objectives are intertwined and our current organizing structure created unintentional silos within the institution. We will move towards consolidating our current four core themes to reflect how interwoven the objectives are. In our analysis process, we asked college stakeholders, "Is the data meaningful?", "Does it show evidence of mission fulfillment?" and "Is it a reflection of who we are and the work we do?" As the college moves from our current core theme structure towards a reflection of our institution, we will simultaneously work towards the board of trustee initiative to implement an Indigenous governance system. This objective is reflected within the current core theme one, Engage Indigenous Knowledge. NWIC leadership will continue the facilitation of this reorganization and movement towards Indigenization.

### Indigenous Governance System

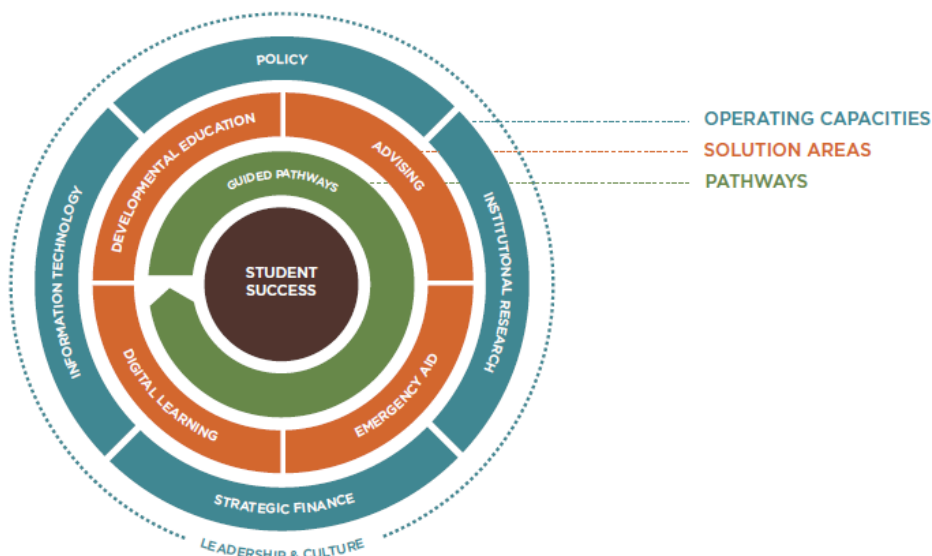
While we plan for how the institution will consolidate current core themes NWIC leadership will work to incorporate an Indigenous Governance system. In the 2016 [Board of Trustees Indigenous Governance Initiative](#), the college received directive to develop an Indigenous Governance system that is "inclusive, recognizes and asserts our commitment to embedding indigenous practices, ideas, principles, and our original world view in all our systems and academic pursuits" (NWIC Board of Trustees, 2016). As we undergo this process, we will use the approved continuous improvement model as well as focusing on key areas provided to us by the Board:

- Renew our original principles underlying our original worldview, environment, homeland, people(s), as preserved for us through language(s).
- Reconstruct our relationality and the Indigenous reality that has been fragmented and distorted through mainstream curriculum.
- Establishes and expands Indigenous teaching and learning as one of the pillars of education.

- Understand and convey a deeper meaning of the four approved NWIC beliefs.
- Align our institution and our systems with tribal self-determination through the college's mission

## The Institutional Transformation Assessment

### VISUALIZATION OF ITA CATEGORIES



To further evaluate Northwest Indian College's commitment to student success, we will be undergoing the Institutional Transformation Assessment (ITA) in partnership with The Gates Foundation and AIHEC. The ITA is an assessment tool that includes over 100+ questions. The questions are designed to cover all areas shown in the diagram above. After the assessment is completed, we will be using the Northwest Indian College assessment continuous improvement model to make improvements across the institution.

## Non-Academic and Academic Assessment and Evaluation Tools

The non-academic assessment and evaluation tools were mentioned briefly in our new 2018-2024 Assessment Plan. In regards to academic assessment, we evolved our assessment matrix to include the NWIC Values and Beliefs, with an emphasis on qualitative data and telling our story. Our academic assessment narrative now includes the following questions that guide our analysis:

1. What are some of the things I changed from the last time I taught this course?
2. What did I do to determine what the students learned? Identify your assignment strategies.
3. What did the students learn? Connect with course and program outcomes.
4. Were there any strategies that stood out as being especially effective to student learning?
5. What support strategies did I implement?
6. How did the course modality affect teaching and learning?

7. In what ways did I integrate Indigenous pedagogy into the curriculum? A place-based teaching and learning approach, story sharing, genealogy, origin stories, and/or identity development?
8. What direct feedback did I receive from students?
9. What are some things I plan on changing the next time I teach this course?

In order to strengthen our non-academic assessment practices we have begun to align and scale up our processes across the institution. Within academic assessment, our tools utilize our institutional values and beliefs to assess at the course and program level. The college would like to create a similar process for non-academic programs such as our student services, which includes residence life, academic advising, and athletics that demonstrate impact on student achievement.

Our four priorities will guide our work as we conclude our current strategic plan. Furthermore, the advancement of these priorities will ground us and help us grow, not only as an institution but as a people.

## Addendum

### Recommendation 1:

*The committee recommends that all core theme indicators be reviewed and revised to ensure they are valid, meaningful, and effectively measure mission fulfillment and accomplishment of the core theme objectives. Further recommends that the college identify a definition of mission fulfillment that may be used to make determinations of quality, effectiveness, and mission fulfillment.*

### Response to Recommendation 1:

In addressing this recommendation, the college has reviewed all the Core Themes and associated Objectives and Indicators during our Year One Reporting process. The college has spent a considerable amount of time reviewing each core theme and then determining the most appropriate objective and associated indicators. The entire focus of the Year One Report was to complete this review process. In fact, a majority of the objectives and indicators have been updated and revised based on the new strategic plan and utilizing the Lummi core beliefs and values as a guide. Throughout the process of reviewing the objectives and indicators, current faculty and staff were consulted as well as community members and elders. The final plan was approved by the administrative team and then received final Board of Trustees approval before being submitted to the Commission for our Year One Report.

One key element included in the review process was to include impact indicators or student stories. This is an area of qualitative data that we hope to gather to further review the impact we have on our students. We also have determined that objectives rather than goals better align with the structure of our strategic plan and are more of a direct measure of mission fulfillment.

Although the strategic plan and associated Indicators have been updated, there is still a need to regularly reflect on the indicators and make updates as we progress towards year seven. The college continues its commitment to the review of the associated indicators to ensure they are a meaningful measure of the achievement of our institution's strategic plan objectives and outcomes.

In its efforts to demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement Northwest Indian College (NWIC) has continued to review all core theme indicators to ensure their continued validity and meaningfulness throughout the mid-cycle reporting process. The accreditation steering committee consisting of 6 members, and the core theme co-chairs which consists of 8 members, have held several meetings to measure accomplishment of core theme objectives. Included in these meetings have been the successes and challenges of meeting the core themes, how to strengthen the objectives to ensure quality and effectiveness towards mission fulfillment.

Further, NWIC has identified and defined mission fulfillment, which was approved in May 2018. Defining mission fulfillment was an inclusive process that included faculty, staff, and finally, the board with the approved definition; "Guided by our vision and core beliefs and values, mission fulfillment is when a student has attained the academic and cultural knowledge, skills, and values, to positively impact tribal communities". The definition of mission fulfillment and its connection

to NWIC's mission will require on-going review of the outcomes from all programs of study through our curricular review process.

#### Recommendation 5:

*The committee recommends that the College assess the stated learning outcomes for the one-year certificate and associate degrees at the degree/program level, and the general education program at the program level, to ensure that students achieve the identified outcomes and as a basis for continuing improvement of academic degrees and the general education program (Standard 4.A.3 and 4.B.1).*

#### Response to Recommendation 5:

The college has made substantial advancement towards building a foundation to formally assess student-learning outcomes. The college conceptualizes student outcomes as measurable cultural statements about what is essential that students know or be able to do at the end of each course or program. They are student-centered, cultural statements that focus on the evidence of learning that each student is required to produce.

At the college course outcomes are considered the most important skills, abilities, and cultural knowledge each student will develop by the end of a course. Each student completing a course can expect to be taught culturally congruent context aligned to the course outcomes. The college considers program outcomes as the overarching skills, abilities, and cultural knowledge that is emphasized and reinforced within the courses of a specific program. They are measurable cultural statements and evidence that define student skills, abilities and cultural knowledge. NWIC uses the language of course and program outcomes to determine student learning outcomes. Each two-year program of study offers a variety of general education courses from which a student may choose to fulfil each section of [program requirements](#).

In spring 2017, the two-year degree faculty and Associate Dean of two year degree programs began meeting to form a timeline for the assessment of one-year certificate and associate degrees at the degree/program level, and general education at the program level. The college currently has no one-year certificate programs. Declining enrollment led the college to shift any remaining programs to the [Work Force](#) initiative which focuses on career training in technology and the trades.

The goal at the associate and general education level is to identify, assess, and implement a more effective and meaningful approach for assessing and documenting the achievement of student learning outcomes which leads to assessment of the program outcomes. The development of a Program Outcomes Assessment Portfolio will allow for the general education program to be assessed as a whole. The Portfolio was created to collect student/course outcomes to determine if they met or exceeded [program outcomes](#). A separate [rubric](#) for each general education course was developed to further guide the assessment process.

Northwest Indian College engages in evidence-based assessment of student learning. Student learning outcomes for each general education course have been identified to reflect the necessary breadth, depth, and synthesis of learning as it applies to program outcomes. Northwest Indian



College is committed to providing the best possible learning environment to its students, a process that can only be achieved by constantly evaluating, modifying and adapting to student learning (continuous cycle of improvement). The newly developed Program Outcome Assessment Portfolio allows a platform to review and assess student learning outcomes to ensure that student learning is achieved at the program outcome level.

The Portfolio continues to be a work in progress. For example, some elements (rubrics) are in draft format. The college will develop rubrics for all identified courses (general education, foundational and required) by the end of academic year 2021. In addition, the FYE and the assessment team will continue to review and assess all student learning outcomes submitted in the portfolio to measure attainment of program outcomes.