



**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Education & Labor
Subcommittee on Higher Education & Workforce Investment**
Hearing on Contributions of Tribal Colleges & Universities (TCUs)

Tuesday, July 19, 2022

Testimony of Cynthia Lindquist, President Cankdeska Cikana (pronounced - chan desh ka chee kan na) Community College (CCCC):

Good morning Chairman Scott and members of the Committee on Education and Labor. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) and especially, Cankdeska Cikana Community College (CCCC). I am Cynthia Lindquist or Ta'Sunka Wicahpi Win, Star Horse Woman, and am a member of the Spirit Lake Dakota Tribe. I have been president of CCCC since 2003 and thus am now a 'senior' member of the tribal college network with close to 20 years higher education experience.

Cankdeska Cikana means Little Hoop and is the Dakota name of Paul Yankton, Sr. who was killed in World War II. Our namesake was a proud warrior who fought for his country and for his Tribe. His only son and namesake (Paul Yankton, Jr) was the Board chair for over thirty years. Father and son believed in independence and self-sufficiency and that it is through education that individuals can improve self and community. Paul Jr passed away in 2014 and his son, Doug Yankton, is the Chairman of the Spirit Lake Tribe. Chairman Yankton's family asked him to carry on his father's and grandfather's Dakota name, Cankdeska Cikana, which he does proudly and honorably as a CCCC graduate.

CCCC is a small, rural, tribal, community college located in Benson County, North Dakota and serving the residents of the Spirit Lake Tribe's reservation community. At 28%, Benson County has nearly double the U.S. Poverty Rate and the reservation's unemployment rate is at 56%

according to the last Bureau of Indian Affairs Labor Force Report 2013. The Spirit Lake Tribe has 7,558 enrolled tribal members with about half living on the reservation (Spirit Lake Tribe Enrollment Office 01/25/2021). According to the U.S. Census 2010 data, only 7% of Spirit Lake tribal members have achieved a bachelor's degree as compared to 26% of U.S. All Races or 28% for North Dakota.

Like all TCUs, CCCC was established in response to Native students failing at mainstream institutions. All TCUs have as their core mission the teaching, perpetuation, and learning of indigenous culture and language. CCCC was chartered by the Spirit Lake Dakota Tribe in 1974 and we will celebrate our 50th anniversary in 2024. CCCC has conferred close to 1,000 degrees and certificates since its first graduating class in 1977. CCCC is a non-profit, public institution with an average fall student enrollment of 240. The College is an associate degree granting institution accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. A CCCC student is typically a Native single mother who works full time. About 12-14% of CCCC students are non-Native and, like all tribal colleges, anyone is welcomed to attend our institution.

CCCC does remarkable work with little resources and the breath of programming is not realized by the general public. Besides the ten academic programs and four certificates, the College does dual credit/college credit with the four local high schools as well as weekend academies for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and for literacy (English, reading, writing). CCCC runs the adult learning program for the reservation community with 15-18 GED completers each year who then get a tuition waiver to enroll at the College. The CCCC Valerie Merrick Memorial Library averaged 2,000 patrons on a monthly basis pre-pandemic as it is the community library and resource center for internet access. CCCC administers the Tribe's Head Start program that is funded to serve 170 children but with COVID constraints is operating at 72% capacity (120 children). CCCC provides our students with research and internship opportunities as well as community activities via the Land Grant programming such as community gardening, harvesting, and farmer's market. We work with the Tribe's food distribution program to assist with access and choices for food security. CCCC emphasizes Dakota culture and language through academic offerings but also with community education forums or continuing education credit.

Think Dakota • Live Dakota

CCCC is an EO/AA college.

As a vested and contributing member of the regional community, CCCC added \$12.5 million in income in fiscal year 2018-19, a value approximately equal to 1.6% of the region's total gross regional product (GRP). Expressed in terms of jobs, CCCC's impact supported 237 jobs. CCCC creates a significant positive impact on the region's (and Tribe's) economy that generates a return on investment to students, taxpayers, and society. (The Economic Value of Cankdeska Cikana Community College Fact Sheet July 2020)

American Indians and Alaska Native people have a very unique and special relationship with this Country. It is a political (not race based) relationship that emanates from treaties and the founding of the United States. The unique relationship is complicated and marred by misunderstanding and stereotypes. Treaties created a 'trust' relationship that commonly included the guarantee of peace, provision for land boundaries, hunting and fishing rights, tribal recognition of U.S. authority and the protection of the U.S. government. The unique relationship is defined in case law and statute as a political relationship. Most all treaties call for the provision of medical services, education, and the welfare of Native people.

The establishment of TCUs over fifty years ago demonstrates the federal trust responsibility as well as tribal sovereignty. If CCCC were not here, Spirit Lake Tribe would have much fewer college graduates. Each and every student who comes to CCCC is taking a giant leap of faith and it becomes a family affair. Yes, our students need nurturing to be college students but once they find their footing, there are wonderful success stories – nurses, social workers, child care workers, professional drivers, administrators, teachers, and engineers. We fulfill tribal employment needs.

CCCC's biggest challenge is adequate resources to grow our own faculty and professionals. We do not have a development office or research department or mental health counselors. COVID-19 has brought many losses for our community and we are struggling to train tribal members to teach Dakota culture and language – both at the college level and for community education.

The primary funding for tribal colleges is the Tribal College Act and it has only been recently that appropriations reached the authorized mark of \$8,000 per FTE (full-time equivalent) but the

need is double that amount. Most State institutions are funded at approximately \$16,000 per FTE.

CCCC is most grateful for the COVID relief funding provided by Congress! This funding has allowed us to stay open, to keep working and to continue our services to students and the community. CCCC students are being provided with tuition, fees and books along with emergency funds for rent or utilities or car repairs. We also provide gift cards for groceries or gas. CCCC's enrollment has increased and we are studying factors as to why. We are also seeing an increase in Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) for our students. CCCC has published three reports on COVID relief funding (Feb 2021, Dec 2021, and Mar 2022) that highlights how funds have been expended as well as stories from students and faculty. These reports are available on the CCCC web site (www.littlehoop.edu). With endemic poverty, rural isolation, substance use issues and then the pandemic, CCCC has been able to provide a safe college experience for our students with the COVID relief funds.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony and to educate the Committee about Cankdeska Cikana Community College and tribal colleges in general.



Cynthia Lindquist

Cynthia Lindquist, President
Cankdeska Cikana Community College

