



History of the Wyoming Native American Education Conference

The Native American Education Conference has roots dating to March 9, 2009, when administrators from several schools on and near the Wind River Indian Reservation met with Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) officials to discuss the education of tribal students. The group of seven individuals expressed interest in forming a consortium to “decide what is working, what is not, and what are the missing pieces” and for “designing a more holistic approach ... that meets their educational needs [and] maintains their culture and heritage.”

On April 30, 2009, then-Wyoming Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Jim McBride and a team from WDE met with the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone Joint Tribal Business Council to propose an initiative: bringing together tribal and state government, reservation-area schools, and community partners to focus on challenges and solutions to dilemmas facing Native American students in Wyoming.

Both the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone Business Councils individually drafted and adopted resolutions of support and cooperation.

One of the early initiatives that sprang from the meetings was instituting an annual Wyoming Native American Education Conference. The first took place Aug. 27-28, 2010, at Wyoming Indian High School in Ethete, featuring two keynotes and 30 breakout sessions. The event has occurred every year since, with near steady growth in presentation offerings; tribal, state, school district and private support; and attendance.

The goals envisioned early by the first working group and subsequent planning teams remain the same: focusing on Native students' needs while emphasizing culture and heritage and removing barriers so students may be empowered to be successful in academics and life.