

# Residence, Community Engagement, and Citizenship

*How do non-resident tribal citizens connect with Native nations?*

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Native Nations Institute  
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## **Acknowledgements**

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The Native Nations Institute (NNI) was founded in 2001 by The University of Arizona and the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation as a self-determination, self-governance, and development resource for Native nations. Housed at the university's Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy, NNI works with Native nations and organizations to support Indigenous self-determination, strengthen Indigenous governance capacities, and achieve Indigenous community and economic development objectives. It does this through hands-on collaboration, practical research, and educational programs designed to assist Indigenous peoples in rebuilding their nations according to their own designs.

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## Executive Summary

**Issue:** Federal Indian policy, economic, and educational opportunity have geographically fragmented many tribal populations. Today, tribal citizens are as likely to live “at home” on tribal lands as they are to live in off-reservation communities, especially urban areas. How do these non-resident tribal citizens remain engaged with their own Native nations? How do they *want* to be engaged? Are there actions that tribal governments or community organizations might undertake to engage non-resident citizens?

**Project:** Using an online survey targeted primarily at younger tribal citizens living away from tribal lands, this project begins to answer the questions above. It was specifically designed to provide preliminary insight into 1) non-resident citizens’ engagement with their tribes, and 2) the ways tribes might connect more effectively with non-resident citizens, should they choose to do so.

**Findings:** Despite great diversity in where participants lived and what tribal affiliation they had, a number of shared perspectives emerged.

- Most participants desired a deeper connection to their Native nations—even if they were highly connected to a local Native community (that is, a Native community local to their present residence).
- Most participants experienced infrequent communication or contact from their tribes. A third of participants had not had any communication or contact with their tribal government in the past year. When communication did occur, it was most commonly through the tribal education department.
- Participants reported that Native-focused organizations (for example, Native student groups at universities or Indian community centers) were crucial to their engagement with the local Native community and to maintaining Native identity.
- Opportunities to serve their tribes bolstered survey participants’ engagement with their home nations.
- Participants suggested a variety of ways that Native nations might strengthen their engagement with non-resident citizens, including timely communications, providing opportunities for political participation, connecting with local Native organizations, and inviting non-resident tribal citizens to serve the tribe via mentoring, internships, or employment.

## Introduction

Most nations have non-resident citizens, and Indigenous nations are no exception. Unlike nation-states (countries), however, Native nations tend to have high numbers of them. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, more than half of people who self-identify as “American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN) Alone” live away from tribal lands and the counties near them.<sup>1</sup> While some of these self-identified individuals are not citizens of Native nations, *many are*.

Non-resident tribal citizens live away from tribal lands for a variety of reasons (although federal government policy, tribal government policy, and economic opportunity encompass most of them). They may have lived on and off tribal lands as children, moving back and forth as parents’ and guardians’ circumstances changed. They may live on tribal lands part time, as a result of seasonal employment or other cyclical opportunities. They may spend many years living away, going to school or pursuing employment opportunities unavailable on tribal lands. Some have never lived on their home reservations at all.

These numbers and patterns concerning off-reservation residence tell one story. But they do not tell the story of what living away from tribal lands means to citizens (or to their Native nations). This project is a first step toward a deeper understanding of non-resident tribal citizens’ experiences and views on this topic.

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<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Census asks participants to indicate their race; participants are asked to select all categories that apply. “AIAN alone” refers to those participants who selected “American Indian or Alaska Native” as their sole self-identification. While there are grave concerns about the quality of U.S. Census data with respect to Native American/American Indian populations, the “more than half” statistic referenced here is used as a ballpark figure, meant simply to show the immensity of this issue for most Native nations. See K. Pettit, T. Kingsley, J. Beiss, K. Dumlao, N. M. Bertument, C. N. Pindus, & A. Budde, “Continuity and Change: Demographic, Socioeconomic, and Housing Conditions of Native American Indians and Alaska Natives,” Urban Institute, Washington, DC, 2014, <http://www.urban.org/publications/413083.html>, accessed June 28, 2015, and T. Norris, P. L. Vines, & E. M. Hoeffel, “Summary Brief: The American Indian and Alaska Native Population,” U.S. Census, Washington, DC, January 2012, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-10.pdf>, accessed June 28, 2015.

## About the Survey

In mid 2014, the Native Nations Institute (NNI) conducted a pilot survey to better understand non-resident tribal citizens' engagement with their Native nations. Because there is so little information available on this topic, NNI views its work as a first step in a larger, ongoing research effort.

The survey asked participants about current and desired engagement with their Native nations and with local Native communities (that is, the Native community or communities present where the survey participant now lives). Participants were asked to elaborate on what was working—and what was *not* working—with how they are engaging with their Native nations. The survey also asked for basic information about tribal affiliation, gender, employment status, and educational status. Participants were able to skip any question they did not want to answer. The full list of questions can be found at the end of this report.

This pilot survey was targeted at young adults (18-29) who were enrolled citizens of federally recognized tribes and living away from tribal lands at the time they completed the survey. The survey focused on younger people because they were more likely to be reachable via our existing social media connections and university and Native organization listservs. A disproportionate number of participants listed their age as 29. We interpret this to mean that some participants were older than the upper age limit specified by the survey and that engagement is a concern of non-resident tribal citizens of all ages. The survey was open from June to August of 2014. Seventy-four people took the survey and consented to participation through a process approved by the University of Arizona Institutional Review Board.

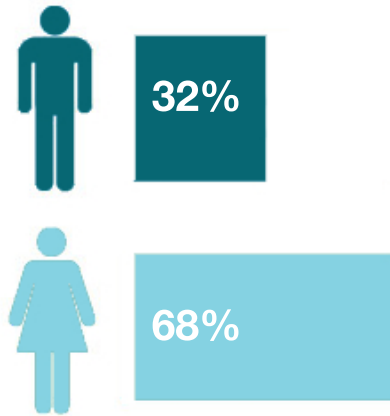
Though the survey was small, responses contained rich stories. Participants lived in communities across the United States and were citizens of many different tribes, yet they shared many similar experiences and hopes for the future. This report describes the information they shared, using their own words wherever possible.



## Who Participated?

Survey participants were largely female, single, and enrolled in school. In particular:

*Figure 1. Survey Participants' Gender*

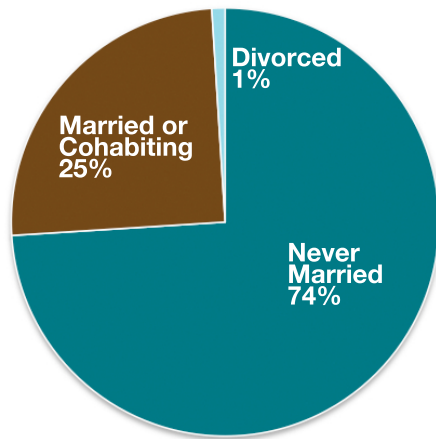


Number of participants who responded to the question: 74

- Twice as many women (68%) as men (32%) participated in the survey.
- Women were more likely to be in school full time and/or to be working part time than men. Otherwise, men and women did not differ in their answers to the survey questions.
- Most (74%) participants were single or never married. One quarter (25%) were married or cohabiting. One percent were divorced or widowed.
- Almost half (44%) of the married or cohabiting participants were partnered with another Native person.
- Over half (54%) of the participants were currently enrolled in school.
- The majority (75%) of participants worked.
- Half (50%) of the participants had lived on tribal lands at some point in the past, while the other half had never lived on tribal lands.

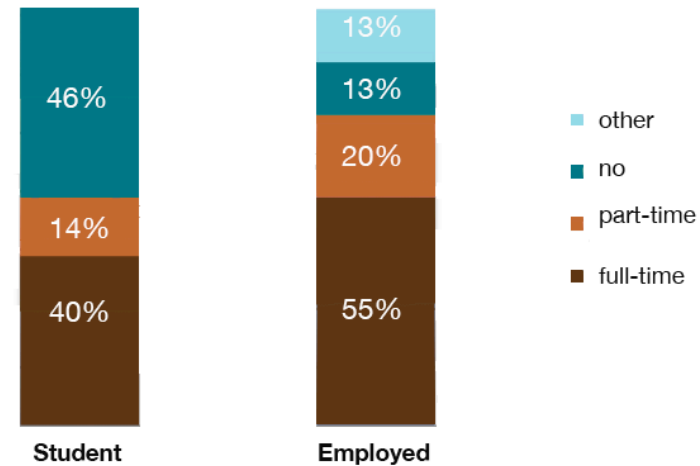


Figure 2. Survey Participants' Marital Status



Number of participants who responded to the question: 74

Figure 3. Survey Participants' Schooling and Employment



Number of participants who responded to the question: 72

*"I am in contact with my immediate family on a daily basis. Additionally, my parents were adamant throughout my childhood that I would pursue educational opportunities wherever they took me. There have been times when I have not been able to make it back for some important events—ceremonies, funerals, celebrations, etc.—but missing these events have always come with reassurance from my parents."*

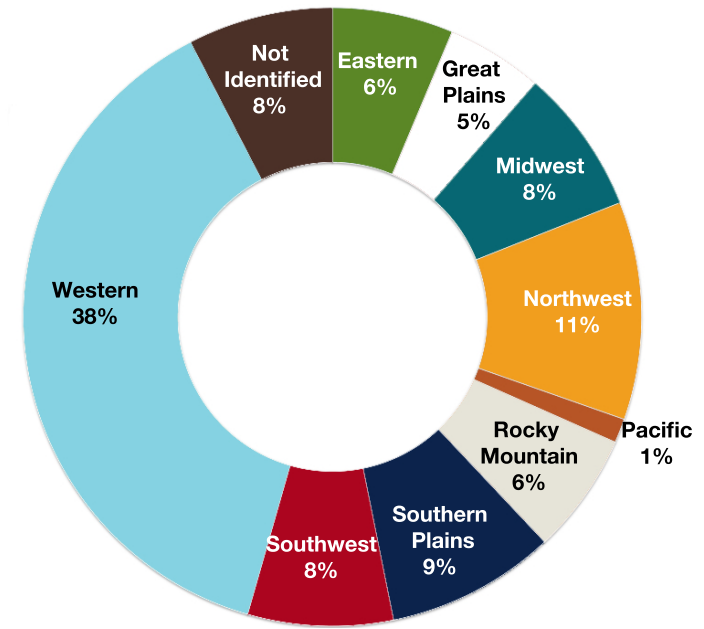
*"I am currently working with a non-profit organization who provides legal services to the [Tribe name] Nation. I am in an office that is off the reservation, but I still am able to talk with people who come off the reservation. I feel that I am giving back to the people and helping them with their legal issues."*

Participants were diverse, representing at least 38 tribes (Fig. 4) and 22 U.S. states (Fig. 5). Thirty-two percent lived in Arizona and a quarter (26%) were citizens of the Navajo Nation. NNI's location in Arizona and the proximity of the Navajo Nation (which shares a large geography with the state of Arizona, has a large population, and a large non-resident population) influenced these response rates.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the distribution of the Navajo Nation population, see B. Donovan, "Census: Navajo Enrollment Tops 300,000," *Navajo Times*, July 7, 2011, <http://navajotimes.com/news/2011/0711/070711census.php#.VS8212TF-oI>, accessed June 28, 2015.

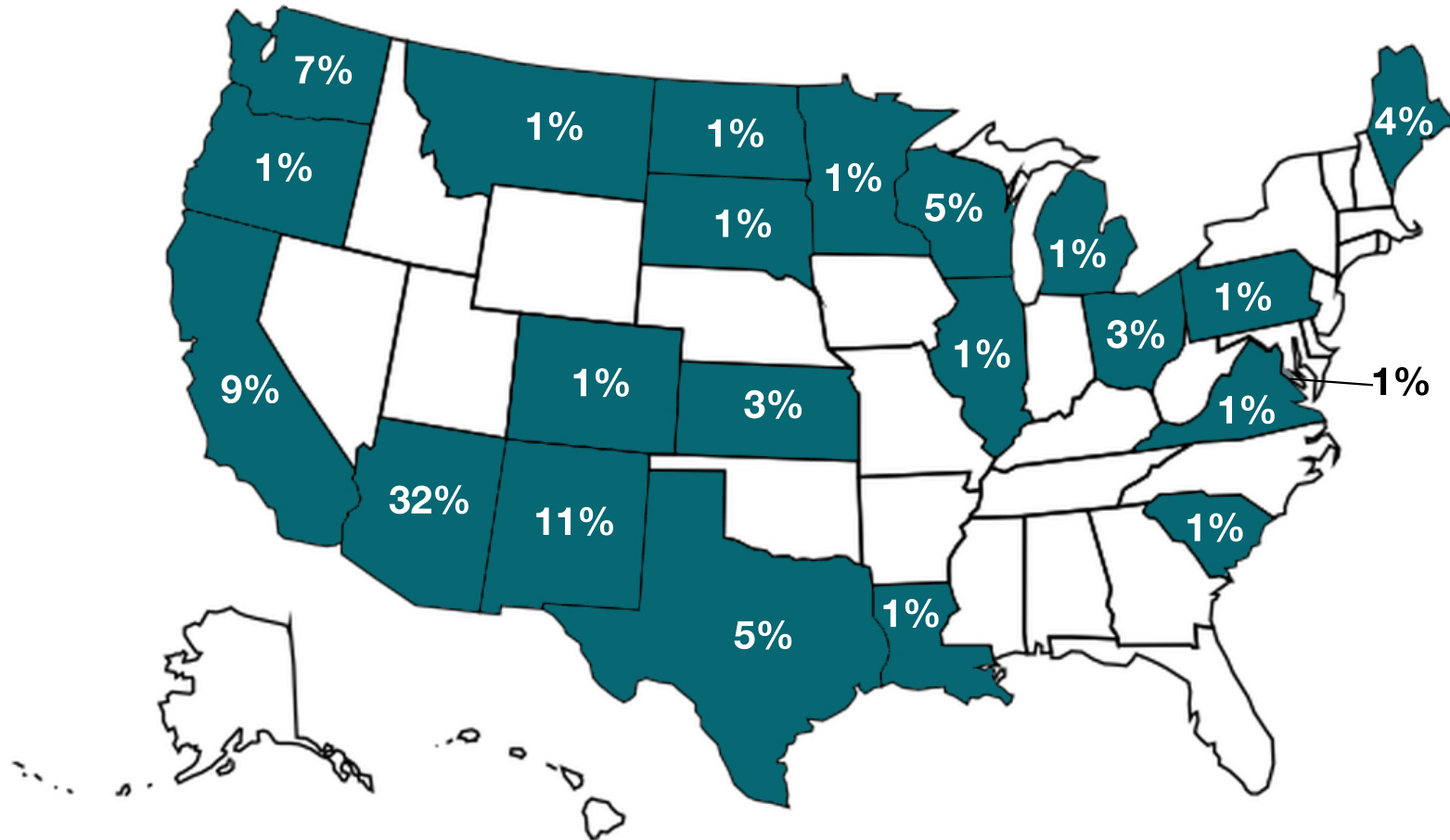
**Figure 4. Participants' Tribal Affiliations**

Eastern	Great Plains	Midwest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians</li> <li>- Mohawk Nation of the Haudenosaunee Six Nations Confederacy</li> <li>- Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana</li> <li>- Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lower Brule Sioux Tribe</li> <li>- Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation</li> <li>- Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate</li> <li>- Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bay Mills Indian Community</li> <li>- Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa</li> <li>- Ho-Chunk Nation</li> <li>- Oneida Nation of Wisconsin</li> <li>- Pokagon Band of Potawatomi</li> </ul>
Northwest	Pacific	Rocky Mountain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation</li> <li>- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs</li> <li>- Cowlitz Indian Tribe</li> <li>- Duwamish Tribe</li> <li>- Nisqually Indian Tribe</li> <li>- Tulalip Tribes</li> <li>- Yakama Nation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dry Creek Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Blackfeet Nation</li> <li>- Confederated Salish &amp; Kootenai Tribes</li> <li>- Northern Cheyenne Tribe</li> </ul>
Southern Plains	Southwest	Western
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cherokee Nation</li> <li>- Chickasaw Nation</li> <li>- Choctaw Nation</li> <li>- Citizen Potawatomi Nation</li> <li>- Kiowa Tribe</li> <li>- Muscogee (Creek) Nation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pueblo de Cochiti</li> <li>- Pueblo of Pojoaque</li> <li>- Pueblo de San Ildefonso</li> <li>- Pueblo of Zuni</li> <li>- Taos Pueblo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gila River Indian Community</li> <li>- Hopi Tribe</li> <li>- Navajo Nation</li> <li>- Pascua Yaqui Tribe</li> <li>- Salt River Pima-Marciopa Indian Community</li> <li>- Tohono O'odham Nation</li> <li>- Ute Mountain Ute Tribe</li> <li>- White Mountain Apache</li> </ul>



Number of participants who provided a specific tribal affiliation: 69

Figure 5. Participants' Current State of Residence



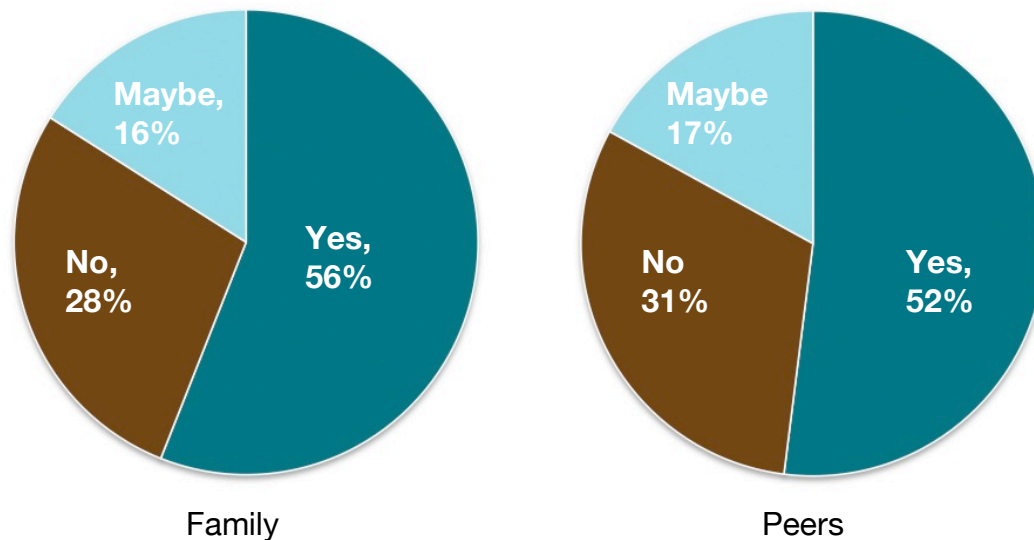
Number of participants who responded to the question: 74

## Engagement

### Relationships with Family and Friends when Living Away

Half (50%) of survey participants had lived on tribal lands at some point in the past. On average, these tribal citizens spent 10 years “on reservation.” The most frequent response among participants was that they had moved away from tribal lands at age 18. Over half believed that living away from tribal lands had affected their relationships with family and peers (56% and 52%, respectively).

*Figure 6. Do participants perceive that living away has affected their relationships?*



Number of participants who responded to the question: 72 and 71, respectively

Some participants gave more detail about how they believed their relationships had (or had not) been affected by where they lived. For example:

*“I was adopted out and raised by a non-Native family away from my tribal lands. I met my birth mother, and the rest of my extended Native family when I was 13 years old. Because I went away for college and graduate school, I have never been very close—geographically or emotionally—with my Native family.*”

*When I come back, I often feel like I don't belong because I don't know our language or our traditions and do not have much of a relationship with many of my cousins, aunties, uncles, etc."*

*"I don't speak my language very well, since there wasn't anyone to talk with in [my Native language]. I am educated, but now have remarried to a man [from a different tribe], we both speak our languages but only to our family members. I have lost my culture, by not practicing my traditions. I have grown to practice my husband's traditional side instead."*

*"I don't know many of my people and even the ones I do know of, they as well lived far away from tribal lands. Eventually information about where we came from got lost and connections were cut. By the time it got to me and those before me our culture was gone, no one spoke the language and had any contact with those who could possibly live on or near tribal lands."*

*"I don't know much about my Native American Indian family. My parents divorced when I was two years old and I never lived near my Indian relatives. Although I have contact with my Indian relatives on Facebook, they do not bring up the subject of their tribal histories or experiences growing up as a Native American Indian."*

*"My connection with my tribe has been mostly through one relative and a tribal education staff, with the staff connecting with me and my immediate family in [state] more. My one cousin has remained our main contact and we have slowly started relationships with other family members. Those relationships have taken years to develop, and are still in progress in many ways."*

*"My extended Native family has lived on and off reservation. My immediate family has always lived off reservation, except my mom who grew up there. I only know a few relatives on the reservation and do not have much contact with them. If I were to move to the reservation one day, which I have considered, I think people would not receive me well at first or take me seriously as a [Tribe Name] person because I did not grow up there."*

*"Living off the reservation leaves me personally disconnected from my culture."*

*"If anything, I've become closer to people from home. I've spent a lot of time with people from the reservation in the schools I've gone to. And they went through the same thing. Most of us have understanding family and friends that know we are going to school and coming back with that knowledge to benefit our communities."*

## Current and Desired Engagement

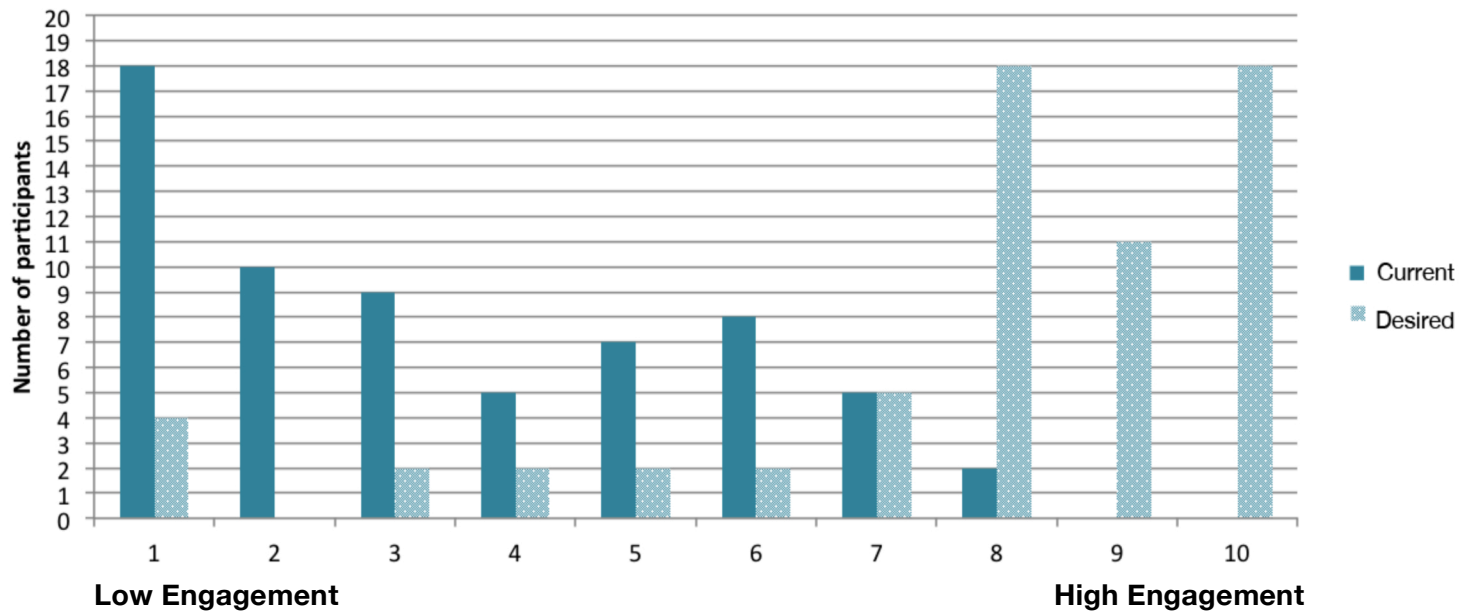
Tribal citizens living away from tribal lands face challenges to “engagement” with the community on those lands. To better understand their experiences, participants were asked to rate both their current and their desired level of engagement with their Native nations. Participants were asked the same questions about the local Native communities where they now live. Notably, the survey did not define engagement; that idea was left to the participants’ interpretation. The specific survey requests were:

- Rate your CURRENT level of community engagement with the **reservation or tribal homeland-based community** on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest
- Rate your DESIRED level of community engagement with the **reservation or tribal homeland-based community** on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest
- Rate your CURRENT level of community engagement with the **Native community that may exist where you are living now** on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest
- Rate your DESIRED level of community engagement with the **Native community that may exist where you are living now** on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest

## Engagement with Native Nations

Figure 7 shows participants' desired and current engagement with their Native nations. As non-resident tribal citizens, most participants felt that they had low levels of engagement with their tribal governments and on-reservation tribal communities (see the teal bars clustering on the left in Figure 7). By contrast, survey participants *desired* a much higher level of engagement. In fact, most desired the highest levels of engagement they could imagine (see the lighter colored bars clustered at the right of Figure 7). In other words, among those surveyed, there is a mismatch between the level of engagement that non-resident citizens actually experience with their Native nations and on-reservation communities and the amount of engagement that they would like to have.

**Figure 7. Participants' Current and Desired Level of Native Nation Engagement**



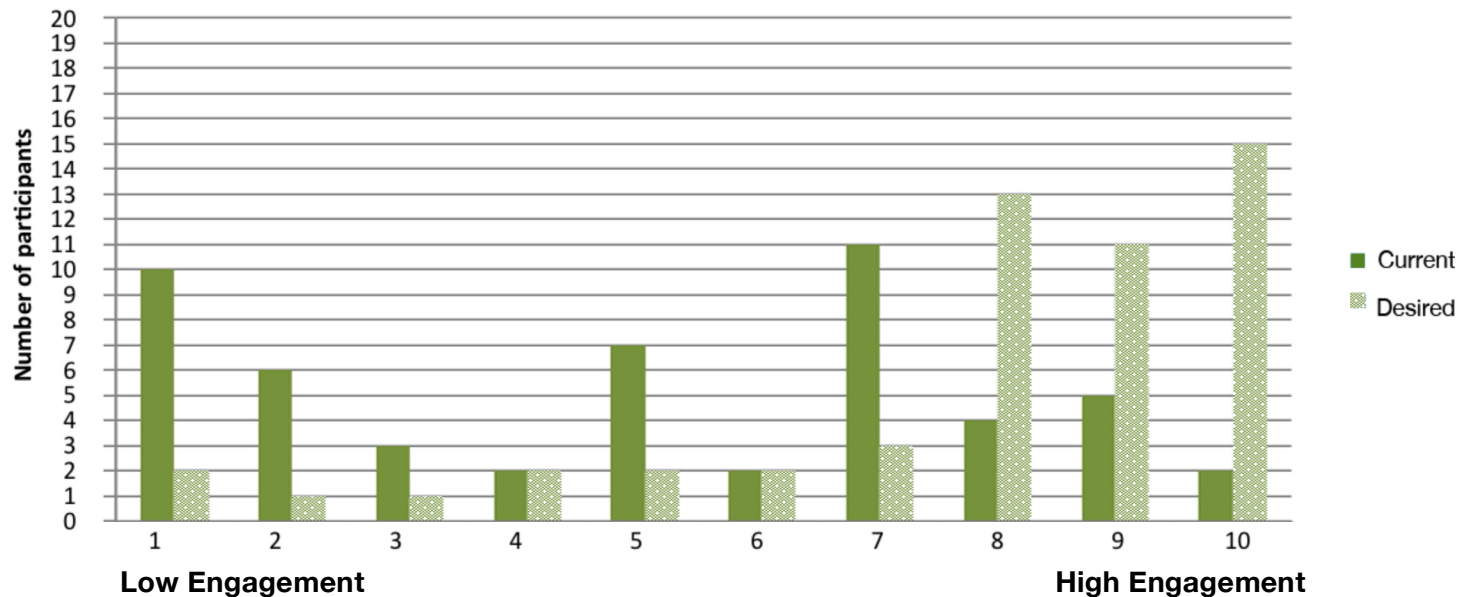
Number of participants who responded to the question: 64

## Engagement with Local Native Communities

One-quarter (25%) of survey participants did not know if a local Native community existed where they lived; 15% said there was not a local Native community with which they could engage. However, most participants (61%) were able to identify either a tribal nation or urban Indian community that served as their “local Native community.” These individuals were asked about their engagement with that community.

The overall pattern of responses concerning local Native communities is somewhat similar to the responses concerning on-reservation Native communities: survey participants desire more engagement than they experience. However, there appears to be less of a mismatch between current and desired levels of engagement with local Native communities as compared to reservation communities. This is most evident on the right side of Figure 8: not only did some participants desire a high level of engagement, some were experiencing it (notice the dark green bars on the right side of the figure).

*Figure 8. Participants' Current and Desired Level of Engagement with Their Local Native Communities*



Number of participants who responded to the question: 52



Many participants shared what was working for them in terms of engagement with their local Native communities:

*“There is a really large and active Native community in [metro area], and when moving here for college I knew I needed to be a part of it to feel whole.”*

*“[Through] my university community, I have made connections with individuals who are members of the [Tribe Name] Nation and other tribes. They have encouraged me to speak my language and have invited me to several community engagements of theirs. I don't go to all of them, [but] it is good to know I am welcomed.”*

*“The Native community where I am living now is diverse and abundant. Everywhere I go I see Native people. Sometimes they are homeless, sometimes they are my teachers, my peers, friends, my cousins living off-rez going to school, reminding me that Native people come in all shapes and sizes, colors, economic backgrounds, etc. It is great to see Indians ALIVE, living in all kinds of different ways IN Indian Country. This may seem a bit silly, but it is not. It is a constant reminder of the current status of Native Nations and Urban Indians that I am a part of.”*

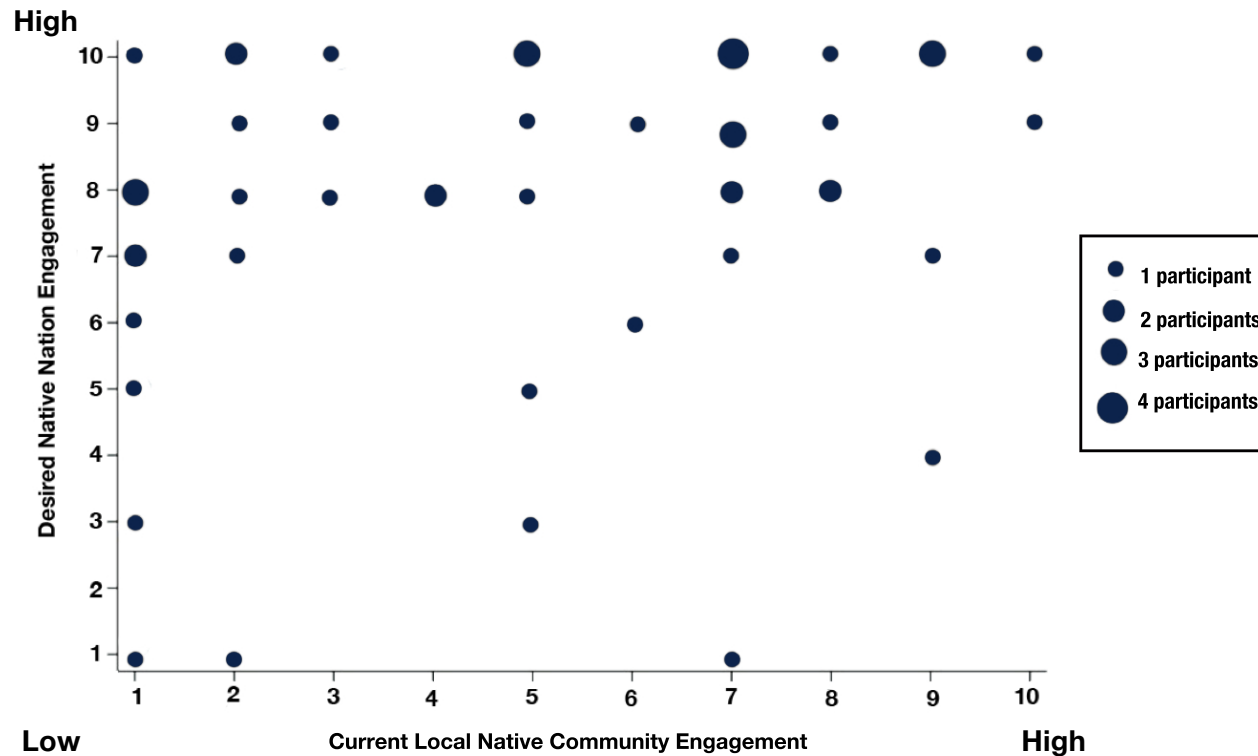
*“I am engaged with the Native community as much as possible at my university, and I am always seeking to learn how I can stay involved.”*

*“It seems as though other Native communities are more accepting of me than my own community.”*

## Desired Engagement with Native Nations

Figure 9 shows participants' desired level of engagement (on a scale from 1-10) with their own Native nations and their current level of engagement (on a scale of 1-10) with the local Native community. The circles represent the number of people reporting each level of engagement, with circle size representing how many people had the same pair of responses. Among those surveyed, being very engaged with the local Native community did not limit the desire to engage with "home" Native nations. The clustering of dots in the top half of the figure makes this point: participants tend to desire high engagement with their Native nations *regardless* of how engaged they are with local Native communities and organizations.

Figure 9. Current Local Native Community Engagement and Desired Native Nation Engagement



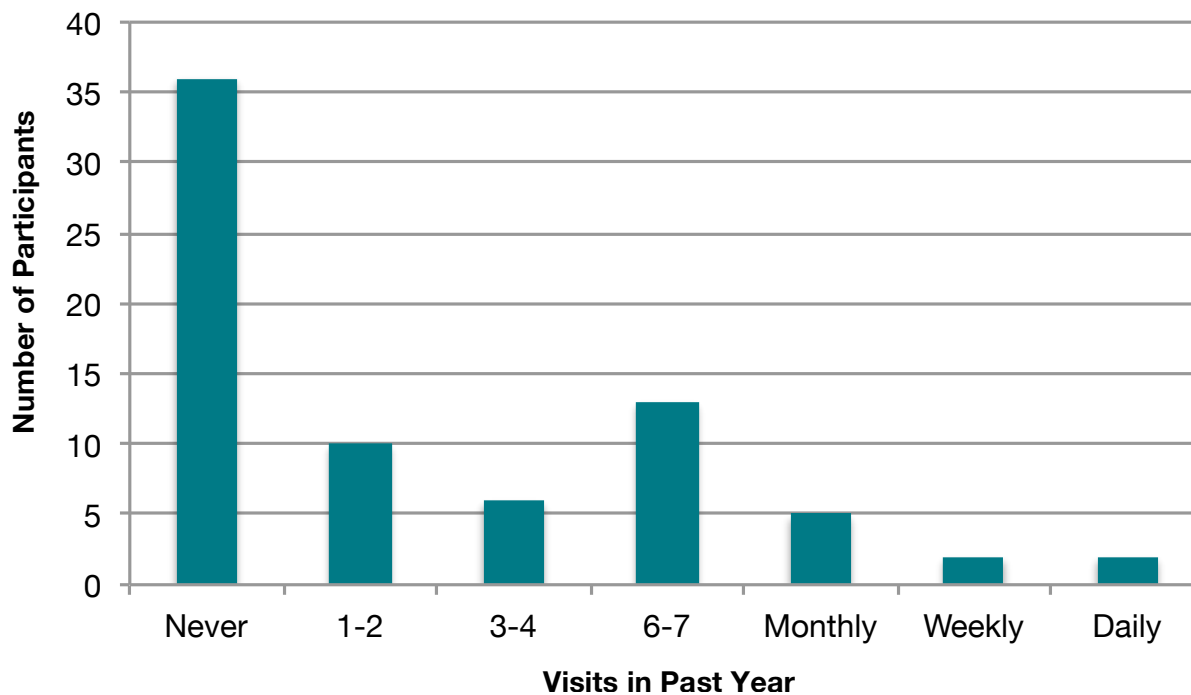
Number of participants who responded to both questions: 52

## Visiting Native Nations

The survey asked participants to recall the frequency of visits to their Native nations, as well as the travel time required for a visit. Half (50%) of participants had visited their nations within the past year, although there was wide variation in the frequency of visits (Figure 10).

Participants said that time and the financial costs of travel are major obstacles, and participants who faced higher costs and longer travel times were not able to visit their tribal communities as often. Most participants answering this question (63%) reported more than 3 hours' travel time to their nations, about a quarter (23%) traveled between 1-3 hours, and one in seven (14%) were less than one hour away. For those participants facing three hours or more travel time, over half had not visited their nations at all in the preceding year.

*Figure 10. How Often Participants Visited their Native Nations in the Past Year*



Number of participants who responded to the question: 72

Several participants emphasized that visits were not just for fun: they often were undertaken to fulfill ceremonial and familial obligations. Several participants commented that not being able to visit negatively affected their family lives *and* their Native/tribal identity.

*“...Family back home request me to be home for family decision making, making it home for [dances] and [ceremonies].”*

*“Our tribe does not have a reservation so our family is more spread out. Now that I have moved out of state I am only able to travel home for major events. My little cousin needs to be reintroduced to me when I go home for tribal events because she doesn't see me enough to recognize me at her young age. I am not able to participate in tribal events such as canoe journey, youth camps, or smaller tribal government meetings. Other members of my family participate regularly in these types of events.”*

*“It's difficult to have any type of interaction because I live so far away, and there's a 3 hour time difference—which makes staying in contact that much more difficult.”*

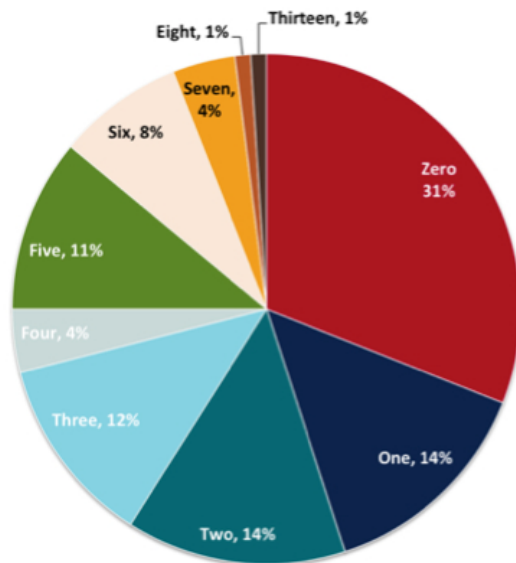
*“...I'm not just going there a lot to visit, say hi and stuff. It's participating or helping in [a] family gathering, ceremony or something that involves most of my family or clan...a lot of the time too after a village ceremony, we as a family are sitting around after eating and my grandma says a few thanks... reminding us of why we come together and doing the [Tribe Name] way. It's just something [that] in my family we do. ...[It] can remind us of our place and how we fit in the family—because it's not easy for [our] families, especially when you live off the reservation and commute back and forth. It's really two worlds, and you're in a gray area...making it work best for you and your family...we have to be mindful and responsible.”*

*“There is sometimes strain on the relationship with my family when I have to balance time and money between school and traditional ceremonies. It can be frustrating also when I am behind in the language development, for both myself and my family.”*

## Communication and Contact

In order to better understand the types of communications or contacts participants experienced, the survey asked, “In the past year, has your Native nation been in touch?” Communications or contacts could be formal (from the tribal government or a program office) or informal (seeing family at a tribal gathering) (Figure 11). The most frequent type of contact or communication had to do with education via the education department (Figure 12). The least frequent type of contact was communication concerning employment opportunities. Thirty-one percent of participants reported no contact at all with their tribes in the past year.

**Figure 11. Total Number of Communication or Contact Types Participants Had Last Year**



Number of participants who responded to the question: 74

**Figure 12. Number of participants who reported each communication or contact type (in the past year)**



Number of participants who responded to the question: 65

Participants who had communication or contact with their tribal governments or Native communities had a greater sense of engagement with their home communities than those who had not experienced any contact or communication. On average, participants who experienced *zero* communication and contact in the past year rated their current Native nation engagement at 2.0 on a scale of 1-10 (n=15). Again on average, participants who experienced *at least one* type of outreach rated their current Native nation engagement at 3.85 on a scale of 1-10 (n=49).

Throughout the survey, many participants expressed the belief that increased communication and outreach by tribal governments and by tribal members living on reservations would deepen their connections with “home.”

*“It would be nice to have a website that is updated regularly or a monthly e-newsletter. I would even participate in surveys or polls about events etc. on the reservation. I enjoy being a part of the open group, [Tribal Name], on FaceBook, so developing a social media presence for some of our departments would be great.”*

*“Mailings and outreach would help strengthen feelings of engagement. If the tribe coordinated meetings in other states, I would be able to attend and feel more connected.”*

*“For any community event...advertise more so that people who live off the reservation are notified in a timely manner.”*

*“Send newsletters, reminders to vote, invitations to events by email or mail.”*

*“Our tribe has poor communication with the members. There is a newsletter, but it is always published at the last minute and often does not arrive before tribal government meetings. I need to go out of my way to find out when the tribal government meetings are and make sure I buy plane tickets to come home for them.”*

*“Put us in direct contact with people who live on tribal lands, whether it be a pen-pal or video chat.”*

*“Be more transparent in events, happenings, politics, opportunities (volunteering, community service, community activities). Be more flexible and conscious of event scheduling (weekends, after business hours, etc.). Send a newsletter to community about upcoming voting, national (tribal) news, positive highlights of communities.”*

*“I think it would have been beneficial...[for] engagement [to be] happening when I was younger, such as youth camps on the reservation or chapter houses getting together annually, sharing stories about the families [that] resided in that area, or even telling creation stories. Or even connecting on social media or broadcasting political meetings.”*

*“If tribes had more active youth departments that serviced youth not just up to 18 but 29, and utilized resources to reach out more through different mediums (social networking, mail, email, phone call), it would lend to a greater sense of interconnection and inclusion. Depending on the distances, there could be meet-ups planned for youth/young people to...get to know one another.”*

## Employment

Many responses to open-ended survey questions raised issues related to employment and jobs. As a group, participants generally were interested in connecting with their Native nation through volunteer opportunities, internships, and jobs. Participants also reported feeling connected to home by working with an organization that served their tribe or Native people in general. However, only 2 of the 74 participants had experienced any communication from his/her tribe that pertained to employment opportunities on tribal lands.



*“Make an effort to bring back the youth with better job prospects that are not related to energy extraction or production.”*

*“I received a job recently, at our tribal museum. I am getting to know more people my age as well as elders.”*

*“I am in the process of producing a proposal for economic development on reservations and am hoping to use this model on any reservation that is interested. I want to see a better life for all Native people and believe this could be my calling in life.”*

*“Working for a non-profit that serves the Native community helps in keeping that connection strong.”*

*“I plan to pursue a career in healthcare and return to the reservation.”*

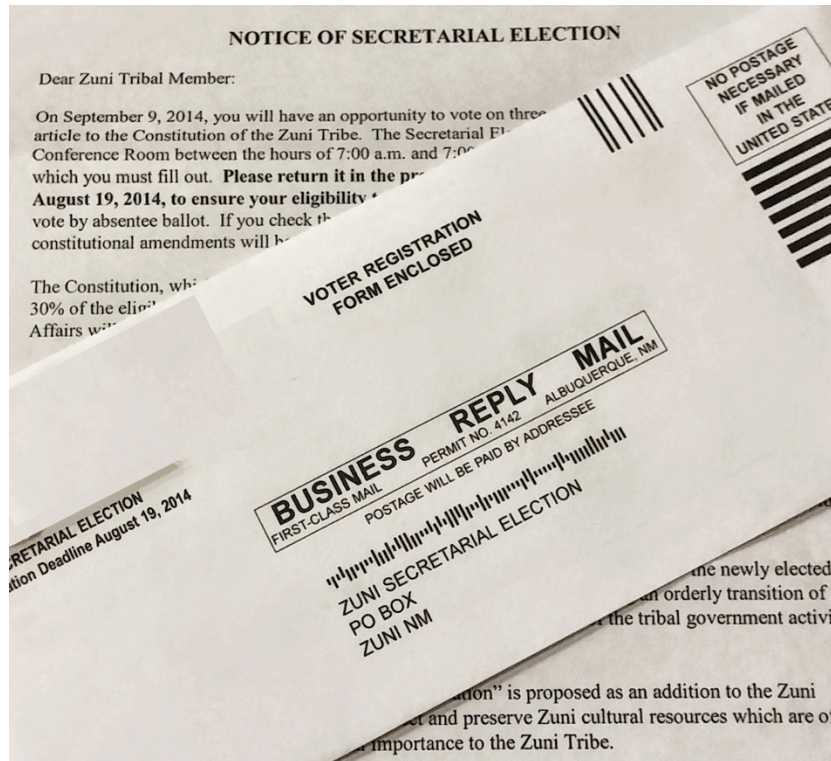
*“[What makes me feel most engaged is] working with people from my tribe.”*

*“I was a foster Native child and was moved home to home. I want to move back and make a difference for my tribe when I am done with school.”*

*“Be more open and friendly and offer summer employment/internships to the students.”*

## Political Participation

Participants indicated they would feel engaged if they were able to participate meaningfully in their tribes' political processes. While absentee ballots were a common request, participants also reported that mailings, public meetings, visits with elected officials, and updates about elections and tribal council resolutions would make them feel a greater civic connection to their home communities.



*“Our tribe does not allow those of us that live off reservation to participate politically. We cannot vote or run in tribal elections and are often ignored or brushed off when we try to find other ways to participate. There is little incentive for our involvement, and it is frustrating to not be able to do anything to help our community to grow and prosper.”*

*“At my university, some of the running tribal council members come visit and talk to the Native students. It can make them feel included and remind them that we, too, need to vote for our the future of our homeland.”*

*“I believe that more interaction from the leaders would be great. Another approach could be to hold more events geared towards engaging with these citizens.”*

*“Extend polling site locations. Offer language and other relevant classes in urban areas.”*

*“Create ways to communicate in areas where there are larger groups of tribal members and descendants to keep them involved in the dialogue and conversations.”*

*“Educational programs and events that bring awareness to social issues make me feel engaged.”*



## Indian Centers and Other Community Building Organizations

Nearly all participants who rated their sense of engagement in the local Native community as 5 or above (on a scale of 1 to 10) touted the role of organizations in integrating them into the existing Native community and instilling a sense of Native identity and pride. Examples of such organizations include Indian Centers, Native student groups on university campuses, and professional and networking associations centered on Indigenous identity. This finding supports previous work showing the importance of formal organizations in keeping Native identity salient and strong.<sup>3</sup>

*“I attend a mix of professional and community events regularly. I reach out to and establish relationships with various community members who I can talk to directly or know of someone I can talk to when I have a question, request, or just want to talk. I interact with Native people daily (socially and professionally) and there are many tribal communities close by, including the urban Native community in [metro] and tribes in [place name] [place name] and [place name] Counties.”*

*“I think [being able to go to an urban Indian center] gives us a sense of belonging and acceptance. In other words, people who understand what it is like to live off the reservation and the struggle you may feel. Not to mention, people who get your jokes, slang words or even someone you can speak your language with.”*

*“[Tribes can increase engagement by offering] services and programs, ranging from health and wellness resources to social events, to tribal people. Maybe utilize the knowledge of local elders more and to offer tribally specific programs or spaces for citizens of tribes outside of [state] boundaries.”*

*“Currently, I feel that I am not as committed or engaged with the Native community that exists where I am living now and a lot of that has to do with the limited time that I have to commit. Additionally, many of the activities happen a great distance away from where I reside and there are times when I am exhausted from daily activities. However, I think that simply having conversation with other Native peers, staff and the like always makes me feel more connected to the community and reinvigorates my spirit.”*

*“There’s a common history and a shared awareness of being away from home.”*

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<sup>3</sup> National Urban Indian Family Coalition, “Urban Indian America: The Status of American Indian and Alaska Native Children and Families Today, a report to the Annie E. Casey Foundation,” Seattle, WA and Baltimore, MD, January 1, 2008, <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-UrbanIndianAmerica-2008-Full.pdf>, accessed June 28, 2015.

*"[City Name] is home to many unrecognized tribal members and tribal members who live off-reservation; as a result, there are a lot of competing ideas about what it means to be Indian. I would prefer if those ideas were left at home and that the community focused more on cohesiveness and inclusion."*

*"I believe the Native community where I live is doing an excellent job making me feel connected. Several student groups exist, our presence on campus is acknowledged, and we have a brand new cultural center. Opportunities to connect with the Native community are abundant."*

*"From my first semester...I joined the Native student organization on campus, and they connected me with the place I am volunteering as a tutor of Native youth. From there I started going to more community events, mostly stuff like pow-wows but also Christmas dinners, protests, 'family nights' at the Indian Center."*

*"The [City] Indian Center can be better at extending an invitation to the young adult student body."*

*"I know it is hard to leave the reservation without having many friends or family around you. However, having a sense of community of family helps get over that feeling. It is really beneficial to have the American Indian Student Services."*

*"The majority of my college extracurriculars are Native-based, and many of my closest friends are Native. We spend a good amount of time discussing Native-related topics, and we strive to maintain and strengthen our cultural connections, both at school and at home."*

## Acceptance and Welcoming



Photo credit Yadira Caballero

Participants felt more connected with their Native nations when they felt welcomed and accepted into their “home” or on-reservation community. Participants frequently recalled feeling stigmatized when visiting. Some felt that living away from tribal lands provoked others to question their authenticity as Native people. When tribal communities welcomed non-residents, the effects were powerful. In fact, comments about participants’ desire to feel welcome were threaded through many responses to the survey’s open-ended questions.

*“There needs to be a better attitude toward the ones who head off the reservation...We need to understand the outside world if we want to live and survive, otherwise I believe we are destined to disappear.”*

*“I think that this is a very great question and one my mother and I discussed recently. It seems to me that there needs to be better communication about the trials and tribulations of those that live off tribal lands. Granted I have spent much of my life on the reservation, but in the time that I have lived off of it I have been subject to some animosity from my reservation living relatives. I think that better online outreach and support might help.”*

*“My tribe has strong feelings about dating someone who is non-Native and I would feel uncomfortable bringing my partner to the reserve for any extended period. Lifting that stigma would make me feel more welcome to be around and actually engage.”*

*“Have an openness and willingness to understand us and not to see us as a threat. Don’t always make us feel like we are not Indian enough.”*

*“For some peers, I can tell they do not take what I share (family stories or knowledge) seriously. They often assert that they are from a reservation to qualify or state their credentials for their opinion, particularly in groups of common friends who know where they are from. Other peers do not care and treat me as any other Native person. They do not place blood quantum or [living] off the rez as a boundary or barrier in our interactions.”*

*“Host special homecoming events or allow us to connect to one another.”*

*“Actually one thing that would be nice is if in the newspaper they would write about people who live off reservation too—not just those living on reservation.”*

*“Allow us to participate in positive and healthy ways that don't make us feel like we don't belong. Allow us to contribute without being demeaned.”*

## Opportunities to Strengthen Engagement

Survey participants indicated a strong desire to strengthen engagement with both their Native nations and their local Native communities. One participant concisely outlined many non-resident tribal citizens' hopes. Ideally she would be:

*"...Speaking with family regularly, being able to have the resources to visit at least once a year, receiving absentee ballots and updates from my tribal government, feeling welcomed by other family members when we visit."*

Participants listed actions tribal governments might undertake to strengthen non-resident tribal citizens' feelings of connection to their Native nations. Some of these ideas may be difficult to accomplish, because they are costly or because implementation pathways are unclear. Other ideas require commitment and creativity but are low cost. For example, tribal governments can help create a more welcoming atmosphere by helping change the conversation about citizens who live "off reservation." They also might be able to do more to reach out to non-resident citizens by inviting and encouraging them to take part in what happens on tribal lands.

- Visiting tribal lands in person appears to be an important pathway for community engagement. Native nation governments and communities might consider possible ways to ease travel burdens for important cultural events and ceremonies, or to incentivize tribal citizens who live away from tribal lands to live nearby.
- Social support and interaction with other Native people may be key to maintaining identity when visits are logistically difficult. Native nation governments and communities might consider ways to create connections among students or other types of non-resident populations.
- Meeting non-resident tribal citizens where they are may jumpstart engagement with their home communities. Native nation governments and tribal communities may wish to consider establishing a tribal presence in urban areas where many tribal non-residents live. Alternatively, they might take advantage of existing networks by partnering with organizations that may already exist in these places (such as Indian centers or Native students associations).
- Feelings of rejection can undermine efforts to increase community engagement. Native nation governments and tribal communities might consider how to promote welcoming behaviors and attitudes among citizens who live on tribal lands. These might include honoring non-residents, increasing coverage about non-residents in tribal newspapers and social media outlets, hosting homecoming days or events, and generally improving communication with them often.

- Opportunities to work for the tribe or on behalf of tribal citizens may improve non-resident citizens engagement with and commitment to the community living on tribal lands. Native nations governments and tribal communities could consider pathways by which non-residents can serve, work, participate, and contribute to the tribal community.
- Political participation can boost community engagement. Native nation governments and tribal community might benefit from envisioning how the tribe could benefit from greater non-resident participation in the political process, whatever appropriate form that might take, and work toward implementing that vision.

## Future Directions

This project was a first step, one that raises questions for further investigation and sets the direction for future research. For example, will the same perspectives and experiences be evident in a larger sample? How are Native nations that choose to engage with non-resident tribal citizens doing so? When opportunities are provided for greater engagement, do non-resident tribal citizens take them up? What networks exist that tribes might leverage to increase non-resident tribal citizens' engagement (Indian centers, University groups, other formal organizations)? What role do Indian centers play—and what future roles might they play—in strengthening non-resident tribal citizens' engagement with local Native communities and with their Native nations?

## Survey Questions

### Residence, Connectedness, and Citizenship for Young Adult American Indians

The purpose of this research project is to help tribes understand the extent to which American Indian young adults ages 18-29 living away from tribal lands feel engaged with and connected to their Native communities, and what tribes might do to better connect with these citizens. This is a research project being conducted by Jennifer Schultz, PhD and Stephanie Carroll Rainie, MPH at the Native Nations Institute, University of Arizona. You are invited to participate in this research if you are:

- A citizen of a federally recognized American Indian tribe or Alaska Native village
- Between the ages of 18-29
- Living off-reservation or away from tribal lands

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time you will not be penalized. The procedure involves filling an online survey that will take approximately 10 minutes. Your responses will be confidential. The survey questions will be about your experience with living off-reservation, and your feelings of connection or engagement with your tribal community. We will do our best to keep your information confidential. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not require that you identify yourself.

If you wish, at the end of the survey you will have the option of providing your name and contact information so that we may contact you for a follow up interview. The results of this study will be used to identify meaningful ways for such young people to participate in the community as citizens, even while living “off-reservation”. The results will help tribes know more about how they can facilitate enduring connections and engagement with their young adult, off-reservation populations.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Jennifer Schultz at [jschult1\[at\]email.arizona.edu](mailto:jschult1@email.arizona.edu) or 520-333-9214. This research has been reviewed according to the University of Arizona IRB procedures for research involving human subjects. This project is funded by a grant from the Morris K. and Stuart L. Udall Foundation.

Q1 ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that: • you have read the above information • you voluntarily agree to participate • you are at least 18 years of age • you meet other eligibility requirements. If you DO NOT wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.

- Agree (1)
- Disagree (2)



Q2 The next series of questions collects basic demographic information about you...

Q3 Sex?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

Q4 Age?

- 18 (1)
- 19 (2)
- 20 (3)
- 21 (4)
- 22 (5)
- 23 (6)
- 24 (7)
- 25 (8)
- 26 (9)
- 27 (10)
- 28 (11)
- 29 (12)

Q5 Tribal Affiliation?

Q6 Marital Status?

- Single/Never Married (1)
- Married/Cohabiting (2)
- Divorced (3)
- Widow(er) (4)

If Married/Cohabiting Is NOT Selected, Then SKIP TO Q9 Where do you currently live?

Q7 Is your spouse/partner American Indian or Alaska Native?

Yes (1)

No (2)

If Yes Is NOT Selected, Then SKIP TO Q9 Where do you currently live?

Q8 Your spouse/partner's tribal affiliation?

Q9 Where do you currently live (e.g. Tucson, Arizona)?

Q10 Are you employed?

Full-Time (1)

Part-Time (2)

Not working (3)

Other (4) \_\_\_\_\_

Q11 Are you currently enrolled in school?

Full-Time (1)

Part-Time (2)

No (3)

Q13 For how long/when?

Q14 At what age did you last move away from tribal lands/reservation?

Q15 Why did you move (e.g. school, work opportunities, etc.)?

Q16 Has living away from tribal lands affected your relationship with family (immediate and/or extended)?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Maybe (3)

Q17 ...how can you tell?

Q18 Has living away from tribal lands affected your relationship with peers (non-kin) that live on tribal lands / reservation areas?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Maybe (3)

Q19 ...how can you tell?

Q20 In the past year has your Native nation or tribe been in touch? Select all that apply.

- Newsletter (1)
- Newspaper (2)
- Financial Support (per caps payments etc.) (3)
- Email Listserv (4)
- Phone Calls (5)
- Gatherings (6)
- Events held off-reservation (7)
- Ceremonies (8)
- Absentee Ballots (9)
- Sporting Events (10)
- Fairs (11)
- School on the reservation (12)
- Radio Programming (13)
- Job Bank (14)
- Per Caps Communications (15)
- Education Department or Scholarship Support (16)
- Other (17) \_\_\_\_\_

Q21 The next set of questions asks about the Native nation or tribe you are affiliated with, that exists within the boundaries of tribal or reservation lands...

Q22 In the past year, have you made efforts to be actively engaged with what is going on with Native community that exists within the boundaries of your tribe's lands or reservation? Select all that apply.

- Talking to friends (1)
- Talking to family (2)
- Visiting tribal website (3)
- Visiting tribal newspaper website (4)
- Listening to radio programming (5)
- Visiting tribal lands or reservation (6)
- Voting (7)
- Other (8) \_\_\_\_\_

Note: If "Visiting tribal lands" Is NOT SELECTED, Then SKIP to Q24 What method of transportation...

Q23 How often do you visit your tribe's lands or reservation?

- 1-2 times a year (1)
- 3-4 times a year (2)
- 6-7 times a year (3)
- Monthly (4)
- Weekly (5)
- Daily (6)

Q24 What method of transportation do you (or would you) use to get to your tribe's lands or reservation?

- On foot (1)
- Bike (2)
- Car (3)
- Catch a ride (4)
- Bus (5)
- Train (6)
- Plane (7)
- Other (8) \_\_\_\_\_

Q25 How long is the travel required time to get to your tribe's lands or reservation (for the transportation method you would most likely use)?

- no more than 30 minutes (1)
- no more than 1 hour (2)
- no more than 3 hours (3)
- no more than 6 hours (4)
- no more than 9 hours (5)
- no more than 12 hours (6)
- more than 12 hours (7)

Q26 Rate your level of community engagement with the reservation or tribal land-based community on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Your CURRENT level of community engagement (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What you WOULD LIKE your level of community engagement to be (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q27 What current factors are helping you to feel positively engaged with the reservation or tribal land-based community?

Q28 How might the reservation or tribal homeland-based community strengthen feelings of engagement among young tribal citizens who, like you, don't live on tribal lands?

Q29 The next set of questions has to do with the Native community that may exist where you are currently living...

Q30 Is there a Native "presence" or sense of community that exists where you are living now (e.g. are there other Native people nearby, Native student or Native professional organizations, nonprofit organizations, cultural events, etc.)?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Maybe / Not sure (3) \_\_\_\_\_

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Q35 "would it be okay to contact you"

Q31 In the past year, have you made efforts to be actively engaged with what is going on with the Native community that may exist where you are living now? Select all that apply.

- Talking to friends (1)
- Talking to family (2)
- Visiting website (of local Native organization) (3)
- Newspaper website (4)
- Participating in cultural or traditional activities (5)
- Listening to radio programming (6)
- Participating in social activities (7)
- Participate in professional organization(s) (8) \_\_\_\_\_
- Participate in student organization(s) (9) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (10) \_\_\_\_\_

Q32 Rate your level of community engagement with the Native community that may exist where you are living now on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Your CURRENT level of community engagement (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What you WOULD LIKE your level of community engagement to be (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q33 What current factors are helping you to feel positively engaged with Native community that may exist where you are living now?

Q34 How might the Native community that may exist where you are living now strengthen feelings of engagement among young tribal citizens who, like you, don't live on tribal lands?

Q35 Would it be okay to contact you in the future to hear about your experiences in-depth?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q36 Are you interested in learning about the results of this project?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q37 Please provide your preferred contact information, which will only be used for the purposes you've indicated.

First Name (1)

Last Name (optional) (2)

Phone number (3)

Email (4)

Confirm Email (5)

Note: Q37 appears ONLY IF respondent chooses Yes to Q35 “Would it be okay to contact you in the future to hear about your experiences in-depth?” AND/OR Yes to Q36 “Are you interested in learning about the results of this project?”