

**STATEMENT**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 1, 2013

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**AIHEC COMMENDS N.D. LEGISLATURE FOR SUPPORTING LOCAL TRIBAL COLLEGES AND  
UNIVERSITIES THROUGH LANDMARK WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS**

***AIHEC Praises Tribal Institutions' Positive Contribution of  
Nearly \$200 Million Directly to North Dakota's Economic "Bottom Line"***

The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), the collective spirit and unifying voice of Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), applauds the North Dakota State Senate and Governor Jack Dalrymple for enacting legislation to provide vitally needed workforce development grants to the state's five TCUs: Cankdeska Cikana Community College (Fort Totten), Fort Berthold Community College (New Town), Sitting Bull College (Fort Yates), Turtle Mountain Community College (Belcourt), and United Tribes Technical College (Bismarck).

Below is a statement from AIHEC President and CEO Carrie L. Billy:

"The North Dakota Legislature and Governor's office made a bold—and just—statement in supporting the enactment of Senate Bill 2218 (S.B. 2218). Leaders from North Dakota's five tribal colleges have been working diligently for the past several months with Senate Majority Leader Rich Wardner, Senator Jim Kasper, and others to move forward S.B. 2218, which authorizes \$5 million in workforce development grants to support degree- or certificate-granting programs that will help qualify American Indian students to earn highly recruited jobs in the state, as well as provides assistance to TCU students who want to establish new businesses operating within North Dakota that will employ North Dakotans.

"S.B. 2218 is a landmark bill that creates unprecedented opportunities for North Dakota's five TCUs, which together serve about 3,500 students. This legislation not only helps to sustain the state's booming economy by training workers who are needed urgently for jobs such as in and around the region's oil patch, but it also provides state support to tribal institutions to educate one of the state's most untapped workforces: American Indians, especially those who live on reservations where the unemployment and poverty rates range from 33 percent to 55 percent.

"Make no mistake about it: TCUs in North Dakota have had a critical role in the state's bottom line for many years, and they will for generations to come. According to the recent report commissioned by the North Dakota Association of Tribal Colleges titled, Economic Contribution of North Dakota's Tribal Colleges, North Dakota's five tribal institutions generated \$182 million to the state's economy last year alone. These TCUs, along with dozens of others around the country, are 'beacons of hope' in their communities. It is a very sound investment to always support tribal institutions and their students. Even a modest investment will pay significant dividends for years to come: Education is as priceless as it is transformative.





"We look forward to the positive impact of S.B. 2218 that is sure to come for thousands of current and future American Indian students in North Dakota who are desperately seeking opportunity and change."

For more information about AIHEC, visit the organization's website at [www.aihec.org](http://www.aihec.org).

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**About the American Indian Higher Education Consortium**

The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) is the collective spirit and unifying voice of our nation's 37 TCUs—a unique community of tribally and federally chartered public institutions of higher education working to make a difference in the lives of many thousands of Native American students, their families, and their communities. AIHEC, celebrating its 40th year as the sole national organization governed by TCUs, serves its member institutions through advocacy, data collection and research, and program initiatives, and advances public policy to ensure strong tribal nation's through excellence in American Indian higher education.