

**RCW 28B.126.005 Intent.** The legislature recognizes that Native American people have faced historical traumas that have had a lasting impact in many facets of life, including educational attainment. Historically, education was used as a reformation tactic to strip away Native identity and culture to whitewash the indigenous population and destroy a nation's own first people by separating Native children from their families. The legislature acknowledges the historical use of education as a weapon and the opportunity to partner with federally recognized Indian tribes to establish truth and reconciliation regarding boarding school traumas in order to facilitate change and remove stigmas of how Native Americans view education.

Native Americans face additional challenges in attaining higher education, such as high rates of poverty and lack of postsecondary educational access near reservations. When the state invests in an educated Native workforce, Native communities become more economically resilient, stronger, healthier, and empowered. Robust Native communities help make a more resilient and vigorous Washington state and contribute to alleviating workforce demand by tapping into historically underutilized talent. Therefore, the legislature intends to establish the Native American apprentice assistance program with the recognition that indigenous populations need additional assistance to pursue postsecondary education because of historical actions that have left lasting impacts. [2024 c 203 s 1.]