



**Urban Native  
Education Alliance**

**The Discuren Foundation  
Annual Progress Report**

**Project information:**

**Today's date:** 1/31/19

**Name of Organization:** Urban Native Education Alliance

**Amount Awarded:** \$30,000.00

**Name of Project:** Natives on the Rise Mentorship / Clear Sky Program

**Dates of Project:** 1/01/18- 12/31/18

**Contact Person:** Sarah Sense-Wilson

**In a short paragraph please briefly summarize your project.**

*Natives on the Rise*, (NOR), is a project of Clear Sky Native Youth Leadership Council, UNEA's flagship program. NOR supports struggling students, ages 9-19, who are attending Seattle Public Schools. It offers a variety of inter-generational activities designed to reduce high school dropout rates, improve academic success, and prepare youth for a post-secondary education, vocation or career. The overarching theme of this unique program is to deliver all services within Native cultural norms, in order to build participants' tribal connections and pride in their heritage.

1. **The date that funds were originally granted:** January 1, 2018-December 31, 2018  
**Funds used to date:** \$30,000

2. **How many students (and/or other clients) did you serve during the grant period? How does this compare to the planned service-totals outlined in your grant proposal? Please explain any significant differences in planned v. actual people served.**

From January to December 2018, we provided bi-weekly mentorship sessions to 32 Native youth, at Robert Eagle School. They were supported by 17 mentors. An additional 10 signed up but attended sporadically. Of the 42 NOR registrants, nearly a quarter dropped out. Still, we doubled the number of students served in 2017, which was more than in 2016.

3. **What have you accomplished? What have you learned? Was the project been implemented as you'd originally planned? If not, describe how and why you made changes.**

We accomplished our goal to enroll and retain more youth and mentors, and support Native students who are struggling to succeed. Workshops were designed to grow critical thinking and public speaking skills, improve writing and personal expression abilities, and confidence. We help attendees learn while maintaining or improving their connection to Native principles of community, stewardship, tribal identity and cultural values. For example, the Journalism workshop helped

students practice critical thinking skills by identifying differences between mainstream media versus lived experiences versus Native-driven and Native representative media.

NOR activities that align with Clear Sky pillars of Leadership, Literacy, Life Skills and Language. They included:

- a. **Academic Support: Instructional tutoring and mentoring:** 1-2 times weekly during school year for students in grades 8-12.
- b. **Cultural Learning Activities:** such as The Licton Springs Historical and Cultural Expedition, Journalism workshop, Native art workshops with Roger Fernandes, Native Heroes workshop, mindful meditation, and drumming/singing events.
- c. **Individual Recognition:** activities included Student of the Month, monthly birthdays, and the annual Native Rites of Passage Graduation Celebration, for youth in grades 8-12.
- d. **Community Involvement:** students participated in suicide prevention and public awareness events led by Native athlete and spokesperson Billy Miles. **Other** activities included an annual Spirit Walk, social justice rallies, and field trips.
- e. **Leadership Opportunities:** in addition to regular Circle discussions, fundraisers, and community organizing, NOR students participated in a 4H courses and a Ropes training. Two employees and the Chair received Ropes course certification.
- f. **Athletic Activities:** included classes/workshops in martial arts and Fitness Challenge events. Some NOR youth also participate in our Native Warriors Athletics program, and transfer what they learn about leadership to the team.
- g. **Learning Opportunities through Workshops/Training:** on topics requested by youth. These included: Grant Writing, Resolution Writing, Resume/Job Readiness, Leadership/Advocacy, and Life Skills; CPR, QPR, First Aid, college preparation and Food Handlers Workshops.
- h. **Student Service Learning:** this included CPR and QPR courses, and many of the activities listed above.

We saw a need to improve internal communication, so we've doubled the number of orientations for new volunteers, and staff now have monthly meetings.

Stable funding has helped us maintain program consistency, which is especially crucial when working with historically marginalized communities. We also increased funding and diversified resources through a new King County, Best Start for Kids (BSK) grant, and extension of a second BSK grant.

We've also learned to be patient and adjust our definition of progress. Project implementation and growth has been slower than expected, especially compared to other UNEA programs, such as Native Warriors Basketball, (in which players receive a stipend). Some factors that make NOR successful are beyond our control. We find and screen mentors, and recommend a match between teens and adults, but

the relationships must grow without our interference. While mentor attendance is reliable, the youth are not. There is no pressure to attend or return.

Previously, UNEA identified isolation and “invisibility” as key factors that contribute to risky youth behavior. Clear Sky reduces these by bringing youth and mentors together in a multilayered approach that supports their health, education, social-emotional, and spiritual needs and development in a supportive, intertribal community. We continue to boast a Clear Sky youth graduation rate of 100%, despite the fact that our community still has the lowest success rates in Seattle Public Schools.

Our new site also reinforces and amplifies Native presence, and has potential to send a more positive message to youth about public education. A key accomplishment is a new partnership with the Licton Springs (Native Focused K-8), school next door, whose principal supports our mission, vision and goals. This unique SPS program can also help us solve the marketing and advertising challenge identified in 2017’s Final Report. We know that if families get acquainted with us in the early years of a child’s education, they’re likely to join sooner or later.

#### **4. Quantitatively and qualitatively document project results.**

We conducted pre and post surveys for NOR. The statistics below represent 2018 averages, and questions that were answered with “TRUE”, (as opposed to SOMETIMES or FALSE):

- Approximately 75% said they met with their Mentor at least 1 x month.
- Approximately 75% said the Mentorship relationship was helpful and important.
- About 84% reported improved my grades since starting NOR.
- 84% cited a stronger connection with their culture/traditions as a result of NOR
- Another 84% claimed their Mentor was important to them
- 90% wished to continue attending NOR

In terms on improving NOR, a young adult participant wrote: *“Needs more consistently available mentors for all mentees.”* When asked what they liked the most about NOR, one youth said: *“I love how involved the mentor is and how helpful they are. These past two months my days have very organized”.*

#### **5. What things held you back from being more successful, and what would you do differently if you could?**

While we are the only program offering regional Native youth opportunities to be mentored or become a mentor, a lack of qualified adult mentors limits our expansion of this service. It’s not hard to find caring and willing adults, but we need ones who are role models in their professional vocations or careers, and who identify strongly as Native Americans.

A lack of ownership- physical and mental- takes a toll on us. We don’t have office space, so the program that must be broken down and set up twice weekly, and stored in a closet. Not having a regular office to conduct business creates an on-going logistical challenge. This takes up staff/volunteer time and reinforces a perception many Native Americans have that they can’t trust organizations enough to put down roots.

We sometimes get booted to other sites when there’s an all-school event. It’s unsettling for the elementary age children in particular, and confusing to newcomers.

What we would do differently is put more resources into operations. For example, the Chair and staff have inconsistent access to computers, or to the same platforms. This makes data collection more time consuming and costly, and puts sensitive data at risk. We need tech support and more executive and staff development.

## **6. What is the outlook for this program for the next year?**

We want to grow current programs, and this requires cultivating the next generation of UNEA leaders. Rather than leave, participants can shift their roles and responsibilities as they mature. They're perfect future mentors! Since some of the graduates are now staff, some relationships must adjust to a slightly different power dynamic.

With the addition of a part-time contract grants manager, (author of this report), UNEA will become more sustainable and efficient. This will include shifting some responsibilities now carried by the chair to the consultant and staff. Our goal is to improve the flow of information between programs and operations. Where volunteers intersect in this process, we'll work to streamline systems and improve consistency.

We've already doubled the number of orientations for new volunteers, and staff now has monthly meetings. In 2019, we want to add more training opportunities to increase the capacity of young adult staff and UNEA.

Growth goals also apply to our goal of developing a larger, more diverse board. We think this may attract more mentors, and perhaps new funders.

UNEA remains dedicated to amplifying Native needs, perspectives and voices. We won't abandon our grassroots origins. We'll continue to empower families by involving them in as many decisions as possible. This includes a board leadership and lateral decision-making style that simultaneously responds to the fluidness of our youth, families and community, yet complies with federal 501©3 requirements. For example, new board members must be nominated by a board member, and/or recommended by Elder's Council and Clear Sky Youth Leadership Council. It's a slow, deep process- and not very practical by mainstream standards.

The pressure is always present to conform to the hierarchal, western non-profit model, which tends to allocate a disproportionate amount of funding to management. Given the above-average poverty so many UNEA families face, we will continue to operate with a skeletal staff and rely on volunteers. This allows us to direct the majority of funding to programs enjoyed by participants.

## **7. What have you done to share your success with others?**

NOR youth continued to work on initiatives that benefit Native Americans. Building on previous years' initiatives, (*Two Spirit Resolution* and *Standing Rock & Water Protectors Resolution*), a group of students applied their new journalism skills to create a *Native High School Resolution* in 2018.

They also testified twice to the Seattle School Board with UNEA board members and the chair.

## 2018 Media Successes-

- a. The Journalism workshop series gave youth tools to expand their ability to advocate for social justice, improve their academic and leadership success, and build a foundation for expanding UNEA media coverage in non-Native public arenas. By December, the youth began posting on Twitter and were learning about Instagram. These skills will also help them get jobs. They continue to post on Facebook.
- b. Our relationship with the Tulalip Tribes resulted in an [article](#) that highlighted UNEA youth participation in the first Tulalip-Marysville Pride Walk and celebration of Native LGBTQ communities. Here's an excerpt from the *Tulalip News* about the September event, including comments from a Clear Sky youth:



*The Seattle Clear Sky Native Youth Council of the Urban Native Education Alliance (UNEA) traveled north to show solidarity with the Tulalip Youth Council and the LGBTQ community. The Clear Sky Youth Council previously wrote a resolution in support of two-spirited individuals and wants to continue offering that support at marches and rallies.*

“We just wanted to come and show our support,” says Clear Sky Youth Council member, Asia Gellein. “I really like seeing everyone come together to support the LGBTQ Natives, it’s heartwarming seeing all this love for our two-spirited brothers and sisters.”

- c. UNEA’s participation in a Pride Walk in June was advertised in the Seattle Indian Health Board’s (SIHB) newsletter. This helped UNEA reach a larger age range and demographic.
  - d. Youth perspectives continue to be captured nine times a year through Clear Sky Newsletters, which are printed and offered for free at sign-in tables, (many families don’t have computers or printers), and posted on the website.
  - e. The *Seattle Times* gave an award to AJ Oguara, a Clear Sky youth.
  - f. UNEA Chair, Sarah Sense-Wilson was interviewed on Raven Redbone’s podcast, “*Make No Bones About It*”, by KAOS radio in Olympia, about the Native Youth High School Resolution.
- 8. Is there anything else that you would like us to know?**

We want to emphasize the distinction between formal and informal service delivery- particularly with NOR activities. No one is pressured to sign-in. A small percent of youth participated regularly, but didn’t complete paperwork. We understand this detail didn’t diminish their learning. It may have removed a barrier and made it possible.

**Please email your completed report to: Caroline Maillard, [discurenfdn@gmail.com](mailto:discurenfdn@gmail.com)**