



Strengthening Indian Country Through Tribal Youth Programs



BY SARAH S. PEARSON
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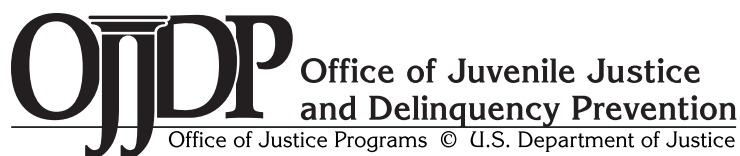
An in-depth version of this report featuring the stories and viewpoints of those who have been involved in and touched by the Tribal Youth Program may be found online at www.aypf.org.

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Introduction

Grants awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Tribal Youth Program (TYP) support and enhance tribal efforts to prevent and control delinquency and improve the juvenile justice system for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) youth ages 17 and under. TYPs operate in tribal communities, supporting tribal efforts to help youth who are at high risk of turning to alcohol, violating the law, and engaging in risky behaviors.

The mission of the OJJDP is to strengthen the juvenile justice system by providing training, technical assistance, and information on trends, new approaches, and innovative techniques to juvenile courts and court personnel, law enforcement agencies, detention and corrections departments, youth service providers, and child advocacy organizations.

This report, prepared by the American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) in partnership with OJJDP, provides preliminary findings based on site visits with five Tribal Youth Programs in 2007 and 2008. The purpose was to investigate how individual programs are succeeding in improving the lives of at-risk youth and strengthening families in tribal communities. An AYPF staff member and an OJJ-



DP staff member conducted focus groups and formal interviews with 137 individuals, including program staff, community partners, tribal elders, tribal council members, parents, and youth in the following tribal communities with TYPs:

- **Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Oregon**
- **Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Minnesota**
- **Old Harbor Village, Alaska**
- **Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Oklahoma**
- **Mescalero Apache Tribe, New Mexico**

The best way to understand the TYP's role in strengthening youth in Indian Country is to understand how the program works in a community. This report begins with case studies of the five tribal communities—their experiences with TYP, and their future plans for their youth and the programs. The report continues with youth views of the programs, “Themes of Success” drawn from the TYPs, and recommendations for the TYP based on the experience of the five tribes.



Case Studies

Following are case studies of the five tribal communities, their experiences with TYP and their future plans for their youth and the programs. All programs included in the study have been working with a TYP grant since 2003. They were selected by OJJDP program managers for their geographic diversity and program maturity. The tribes included in this report are recovering from the effects of the 1954 Termination Act, which terminated the U.S. government's recognition of tribes as sovereign nations.

CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF GRAND RONDE, OREGON

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (Grand Ronde) occupy land near the Oregon coast in a verdant inland valley at the base of Spirit Mountain. The Grand Ronde comprise five unique tribes—the Umpqua, the Rogue River, the Molalla, the Kalapuya, and the Chasta. Grand Ronde has 4,900 members, including 500 youth ages 10 to 17.

BACKGROUND

After the Termination Act was passed, many tribal members from this region moved away from reservations to major cities in the hopes of improving their lives. In 1983, after testimony by tribal members, including youth, Congress restored Federal recognition of the tribes. In 1988, a 9,811-acre reservation was re-established.

Grand Ronde youth and adults face social and economic challenges from the impact of termination. Most of the elders still on the reservation grew up in boarding schools, and few have knowledge of their Native culture or language.

To help heal their people and gain economic independence, tribal leaders have adopted policies that foster self-sufficiency. In managing reservation timberland, they use the revenue generated to address community needs, setting aside a portion to provide capital for future economic development. The tribes acquired additional land in the 1990s and built community, health, and tribal governance centers. Their economic development program includes Spirit Mountain Casino.

THE GRAND RONDE TYP

The Grand Ronde tribe was awarded a TYP grant in 2003. The tribe formed the Youth Project Team (YPT), an advisory board of personnel from tribal departments in Housing, Youth Education, Recreation, Indian Child Welfare (ICW), a Health and Wellness Clinic, and law enforcement, which manages the TYP grant. The YPT provides intensive afterschool and weekend services for 35 to 50 tribal and non-Native youth on the reservation and surrounding communities who are at risk of becoming court involved

or entering close custody. According to Oregon Youth Authority, close custody is their most secure setting for youth offenders, including youth correctional facilities, accountability camps, and work study camps. It does not include residential treatment, group homes, or foster care. Up to 300 youth engage in YPT-sponsored community events annually. Through a community assessment process, YPT staff acquired an understanding of the community-wide problem with drugs and alcohol, and through a second TYP grant in 2006, they adjusted their prevention strategy to deal with a growing methamphetamine problem.

The YPT screens youth by collecting data on five risk factors: poor school performance, low self-esteem, substance abuse, poor peer relations, and low family functioning. Youth entering the program may be experiencing substance abuse or exposure to sexual abuse or neglect, and they may exhibit antisocial behavior. Grand Ronde YPT youth actively participate in community meetings, lead their peers in activities, and learn the Chinook language and culture. Through meaning-



ful civic engagement and exploration of cultural traditions, activities increase self-esteem and improve peer relations. Each quarter, the YPT provides a girls' night out and boys' night out. The girls' night involves a field trip with prevention talks woven in, or board games followed by a conversation on issues such as safe sex, drug use in the community, and personal hygiene where girls receive gift bags of personal products. The boys' night involves activities like paintball or basketball and engagement in a similar discussion of personal hygiene and healthy relationships. From these activities, youth develop a sense of identity, meaning, and purpose, and begin to mature.

The Youth Canoe Club is the heart of the Grand Ronde TYP. A canoe called Stan-kiya (the coyote) is used as a catalyst for lessons in culture, language, and leadership. Cultural advisors engage youth after school in a yearlong curriculum where youth take the lead in activities that prepare them for a 2 ½-week canoe journey. The club is linked to the school through grade requirements, and much of the club experience takes place out of the water. From January to late July, youth prepare for the journey. As they prepare, youth participate in a host of activities, such as hammering out cedar strips and weaving them into a workable rope; sewing shawls; practicing dancing, singing, and drumming; planning meals; creating a schedule for paddlers; and determining seat assignments for the canoe journey. To attract adults and families to the program, the YPT periodically sponsors a family night with a meal and cultural activities to demonstrate progress in canoe journey preparations.

The club's family-like environment puts a premium on responsibility, caring, respect, and teamwork. Experiential learning methods establish a safe and healthy lifestyle for youth who have had little guidance growing up. Youth respect the ideals and people in the club and see the fruits of their investment of time and care. YPT staff use this setting to establish a relationship where they speak candidly and guide youth to stay with the program

and out of trouble. Said a YPT staff member, *"We tell them, 'You cannot paddle our canoe or come to meetings if you are under the influence. You cannot be the face of the club during the week and on weekends be someone different.'"*

A cultural advisor who leads Canoe Club activities predicts that it will be here that the tribe finds emerging leaders: *"Never have we seen such success in reaching youth as with the canoe experiences. There is positive peer pressure generated that extends to families. Youth take their work in the club seriously."*

Staff described a young man whose older brother has chosen to participate in the gang lifestyle. The older brother came to a club activity dressed in gang colors, and his younger sibling said, *"You can't be around here. We are trying to do things differently and we don't want people to see us that way."* According to staff, it is unusual for a sibling to stand up to an older brother. Youth return to the program year after year and help run some of the activities. Said a YPT staff member: *"It is not a start-treatment, finish-treatment, and then you are clean, program. It's an approach similar to diets that slowly change a person's*

beliefs and behaviors rather than prescribing a quick fix."

FUTURE PLANS

Grand Ronde YPT leaders plan to expand the program to meet the needs of older youth and provide more opportunities for them to learn about their Native culture and traditions. The cultural advisor and the team want more support from the tribal government to allow them to take youth to historic locations and build an experiential learning curriculum around language and place. Through the Cultural Resources Department, a course in Chinuk wawa, a derivative of the Chinook language, is offered year-round for all ages and as an immersion program at the tribe's preschool. Local high schools and some colleges in Oregon accept the course as a credit for the language requirement for graduation.

The Grand Ronde community is experiencing a revival of its Native traditions and language. Children under 10 years old are the first generation in more than half a century to grow up in an environment that supports Native culture and language.





MILLE LACS BAND OF OJIBWE, MINNESOTA

The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe occupies wooded, lake, and stream-filled lands of east-central Minnesota. The reservation lands appear as a checkerboard pattern spread across a number of districts and serve as home to 3,660 members, including 500 youth.

BACKGROUND

A treaty with the U.S. Government established the reservation in 1855. The band is a leader in culture restoration among the larger Ojibwe Tribe, whose people now live in reservations across Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. In the 1980s, as a sovereign nation, the band set up a separation-of-powers form of government with an executive, legislative, and judicial branch.

The 2000 U.S. Census revealed that 30 percent of the band's adults have less than a high school diploma, and the unemployment rate is triple the national average. One-third of households are headed by single parents, nearly half have incomes below \$25,000, and 42 percent of pregnant women claim addictions or addictive traits such as smoking.

The Ojibwe strive to maintain their connection with Mother Earth by hunting

and fishing; making nets; gathering local wild rice and berries; producing practical objects from birch bark; and harvesting sugar from maple trees, a process called sugar bush. The Mille Lacs Band's Cultural Workforce Program, supported by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), provides funding for 200 people to work 20 hours a week harvesting and processing the bounty of the land. This allows some tribal members to balance their job responsibilities with traditional, seasonal work to support the continuation of cultural traditions. The band operates two casinos and several businesses, providing employment for members and non-Natives. Funds generated provide for and improve services to band members and surrounding communities. These services include support for hospitals, law enforcement, preschool programs, youth services, a scholarship program, the Workforce Education and Development Center, a tribal health insurance program, assisted living units, services for elders, and ceremonial buildings.

MILLE LACS BAND OF OJIBWE TYP

Using TYP funding, Community Youth Services (CYS) is applying prevention services to reduce risk factors for delin-

quency and for alcohol and drug abuse. The program serves 125 youth, some adjudicated and some in foster care. The CYS is the only afterschool and weekend youth service provider on the reservation and works in partnership with other tribal programs such as Family Services and Law Enforcement. It provides a blend of instruction and activity with a focus on culture and language. The program has already shown measurable results: Data collected from a demographic survey show that juvenile delinquency cases have dropped significantly—from 270 in 2004 to 44 in 2007.

Seen as a change agent in the community, the CYS, with the aid of elders and adult mentors, offers activities and services to youth and families after school and on weekends, year-round. They include cultural language institutes, cultural counselors at CYS centers located in a school or tribal college, dance and drum groups, tutoring and mentoring with community members, and building the cultural grounds at the Four Season Camps (described below). Experiential learning methods at the sacred campgrounds build leadership skills, self-esteem, and cultural awareness. At the CYS centers, activities include Karate, swimming, softball, powwows, basketball, roller skat-





ing, and pool. Formal leadership training is provided for both youth and adults. Family gatherings are organized to allow members to bond as they enjoy bingo or watch a play that exhibits Ojibwe culture and language.

FUTURE PLANS

CYS is transitioning to the Path to Identity (PTI) program, a life-skills program for youth who are in and out of school. PTI builds their knowledge, skills, and identity as individuals and as Native Americans. The PTI's activities focus on the Four Seasons Camps, which broke ground with funding from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. At the camps, run by an elder and lead cultural advisor, tribal members and youth are building roads and trails around 200 acres that surround the sacred campground. They are developing the camps as they learn the Ojibwe language, basket making, medicine, spiritual awareness, cultural awareness, survival, and other skills. An upcoming evaluation will inform staff of areas to improve before moving into full implementation.

The tribe plans to forge an affiliation with the Boys & Girls Clubs to open up greater access to grant funding and services and use the youth mentorship program, Kettle Kinship. To launch the mentoring program, the tribe will enlist the assistance of a Federal program, Learn and Serve America, from the Corporation for National and Community Service. The tribe also will focus on plans to inspire youth to become the future leaders of PTI through a youth council, in which teens acquire leadership skills while learning how to organize and conduct meetings, explore parliamentary procedure, plan events, coordinate community service projects, and work with tribal leaders.



OLD HARBOR VILLAGE, ALASKA

Old Harbor Village is located on the far end of Kodiak Island, Alaska, 220 air miles southeast of Anchorage and 30 minutes by plane from the city of Kodiak. There is no direct road access to Old Harbor, and the local airport consists of a simple gravel landing strip with groupings of bald eagles nearby. A small commercial barge delivers groceries, fuel, building supplies, and other necessities to the 230 residents, including 59 children and youth.

BACKGROUND

Old Harbor residents are mainly of Sukpiak and Alutiiq heritage. The Russian Orthodox Church is an important presence in the village. Old Harbor operates under a complex system of tribal, local, regional, and state government. The City of Old Harbor, incorporated in 1966 under the State of Alaska, has a seven-member city council responsible for the village's water and sewer service, public buildings, airport, and small harbor. The harbor, which has a dock, is home to seals, sea lions, and a variety of fish.

Old Harbor's economy, as with her sister villages, is depressed and losing population annually. Youth who remain face the challenge of ongoing Federal and state regulation of their fishing rights, resulting in the loss of tribal knowledge and tradition, and restricted economic development. Kodiak Island residents struggle with the restrictions of fishing permits, the residual impact of the Exxon Valdez oil spill; decreasing wages; and a stagnant local economy. Families suffer from negative behaviors and a rising suicide rate among village youth. Evidence of excessive drug and alcohol abuse revealed by a survey prompted community members to address cultural identity, environment, economic development, governance, and education in a community plan.



The Native Village of Old Harbor, a federally recognized tribe led by an elected, seven-member tribal council, serves the Native community at-large. The tribal government administers social and cultural programs and provides funding to maintain the village's small road system, spanning four miles. The Kodiak Island Borough operates like a county, and residents of the island are served by health and social services provided by Kodiak Area Native Association (KANA), a regional nonprofit. Under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971, Alaska Natives have organized into corporations to receive settlements of land and money allocated under the law.

OLD HARBOR'S TYP

Old Harbor was awarded a TYP grant in 2003 to serve all youth in the village. The program director chose to design a program focused on family values, Alaska Native cultural traditions, subsistence skills (hunting, processing game, fishing, gathering), and youth development. Staff used TYP funding to transform an existing, underutilized youth program into a thriving cultural center for youth. The cultural center also supports a developing, year-round campground called Nuniaq Camp where subsistence activities occur. A subsequent TYP grant provides for development of a care team of adults and service providers in the village and daily youth programming.

The TYP is the only youth-based programming in the village. It incorporates Alutiiq cultural values and traditions to reduce the prevalence of juvenile delinquency and to increase and improve the village's mental health and substance abuse counseling services. Staff have recruited a diverse group of people to share their cultural knowledge and skills through seminars and classes. Youth

learn about the program through word of mouth and a newsletter distributed village-wide. Food, used as a lure, includes Subway sandwiches or pizzas that are flown in, or tasty subsistence foods such as clams.

In just six years the Old Harbor TYP has transformed youth behavior in the village. The activities engage youth positively in their rustic, natural environment, teaching them to distinguish between poisonous and edible plants, and, if they get lost, to live off the land until found. On Kodiak Island, where bears are common, TYP youth know how to track and respect the big beasts. Program staff look to museums, elders, and experts outside the village to build on efforts to recapture traditional Native ways. As they reach back to reclaim the language, youth and staff are learning together to carve historical Alutiiq masks, preserve meat, and hunt and fish.

The culture center, home base for TYP activities, is open each day after school and into the evening for youth to engage in supervised activities or simply visit with friends. The center provides a safe, warm place with healthy snacks and a caring adult ready to lead activities. Nuniaq Camp serves as a center for outdoor experiential learning. Youth learn about subsistence and survival skills as they build camp, hunt, fish, and clean their kill, preparing it for consumption and pelts. In the winter, a smaller camp is maintained, and deer and mountain goat hunting continue. Youth come to the camp during colder months to engage in discussion with staff and sometimes enjoy the steam heat of the banyan, an Alaskan sweat lodge. Many youth served by the program have been subjected to abusive behavior that has weakened their trust in adults. Time at the camp allows staff to listen to youth, initiating a deeper level of conversation that builds trust and promotes learning and healing. TYP staff also use individual and group discussion to teach youth values or correct social behavior, discussing substance abuse and mental health issues on a regular basis.

Positive attitudes are emerging from those deemed most at risk, and among many youth, personal appearance and self-esteem have improved.

While there is no policy on what constitutes successful completion of the program, staff consider a youth to be successful if he or she is drug and alcohol free, in school, planning to attend college, and bolstered by a positive sense of self.

FUTURE PLANS

Plans to improve the quality and quantity of services in Old Harbor include a tribal wellness court that would support the TYP's efforts to improve the lives of youth and to serve families. The TYP will seek an accountability component of the wellness court that includes a system for dealing with parents who are drinking excessively and allowing their children to attend school unprepared. One week of therapy at the program's camp can make a lasting difference. In the meantime, TYP staff are maintaining weekly care team meetings and keeping an eye out for future funding opportunities. They are assuming a hunting-gathering mentality regarding sustainability as they seek new grants to support future growth.





ABSENTEE SHAWNEE TRIBE, OKLAHOMA

The Absentee Shawnee Tribe is located west of Pottawatomie County in Oklahoma. The tribe has about 2,500 members. Approximately 10,000 youth live on or near tribal lands, including those from neighboring tribes: the Citizen Band of Pottawatomie, Sac-Fox Nation, Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma, and Kickapoo Tribe. The Absentee Shawnee comprise two bands: The White Turkey Band and the Big Jim Band.

BACKGROUND

Until the 1800s, Shawnee Indians lived in areas now known as Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania. At that time, according to the tribe, the U.S. Government removed the Shawnee to Kansas. The term Absentee Shawnee was coined by Federal officials after a portion of the tribe absented itself from its appointed reservation in Kansas, relocating instead to Indian Territory, now the state of Oklahoma. Absentee Shawnee tribal government is composed of a judicial branch; a combined legislative and executive branch that includes the governor, lieutenant governor, secretary, treasurer, and representative; and an election commission that runs tribal elections annually.

The poverty rate among all youth in Oklahoma is 20 percent, but among Native American youth it is higher still, at 29.9 percent. At the juvenile detention center in Pottawatomie County, there are 35 to 40 intakes each month, as reported by Juvenile Services for the county. According to the Oklahoma State Report on Educational Indicators, the dropout rate for Native American males and females is rising. It was 43 percent in 2004, 46 percent in 2005, and 47 percent in 2006.

Financially, the tribe relies on annual funding from the Bureau of Indian Af-



fairs and Indian Health Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Tribal tax revenues from the Absentee Shawnee casino and businesses support the tribe's general fund, which in turn help support programs like the TYP. Gaming tax revenue is the main source of economic development for the tribe. Pumping new life into the casino is a concern for tribal leaders as they obtain new gaming vendors and a casino management group they hope will produce greater revenue.

ABSENTEE SHAWNEE TYP

The Two Stars program uses TYP funding to address the mental health needs of 200 youth, ages 12 to 17, and their families. The program provides comprehensive delinquency prevention and intervention services through intensive treatment, including substance abuse and anger management counseling. It is the only year-round prevention program serving Native youth in the county, working directly in school, after school, and in homes as needed. For the most intensive mental health needs, program staff collaborate with a psychiatrist who sees

youth monthly. The local family clinic's managing physician sends referrals to the Two Stars program.

Two Stars has an office in the tribe's social services building. Staff network with leaders in the community, Indian Child Welfare, and tribal social services to stay in touch with the needs of at-risk youth. They are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and because the community is rural, staff provide transportation for youth who cannot get to counseling on their own, and in some cases, they bring the counseling directly to them. The program team includes a program director, a university-level intern, and a part-time administrative assistant.

Staff work with youth who have anger issues by allowing them to talk about problems privately, using group meetings, and conducting supervised activities to redirect negative energy. The TYP provides counseling services directly in schools, where staff teach skills such as dealing with confrontation, anger management, and respect, goal setting, maintaining good grades, and staying in school. Staff discuss addiction, the stages of alcohol-

ism, what a father or mother may be going through while addicted, co-dependency, and steps to take to stop the destructive cycle. The program's summer leadership camp provides life skills as a prevention service, and older youth (at least 16) may serve as camp counselors, receiving a stipend paid by the tribe. During camp, staff members administer an instrument called the SASSI (Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory) to all youth referred to the program to assess their need for mental health intervention.

Outside the school, Two Stars staff members initiate mental health interventions for up to 50 court-involved youth through a voluntary 10-week juvenile intervention program open only to Native American youth. Staff make drug, alcohol, and mental health assessments and begin treatment through one-on-one and group counseling.

Many of the youth served are at risk of or are suffering from substance abuse, behavioral disorders, depression, fetal alcohol syndrome, ADHD, or alcohol or illicit drug use, and are or may have spent time in foster care. Treatment plans for one-on-one counseling sessions are updated weekly and include specific goals. A depression index is used to assess youth involved in a crisis, and as needed, youth are referred to St. Anthony's hospital for suicide prevention treatment. Staff seek to reduce recidivism to below 25 percent of youth who complete the program, as measured by a 6- and 12-month follow-up.

Two Stars sponsors a monthly afterschool youth council and engages adult volunteers to help youth develop leadership skills through community event planning. The youth council sponsors a New Year's Eve dance, promoting it with flyers advising other youth to remain drug free and gang free, and to maintain abstinence. The program is the only venue that works with youth to help them develop goals, stay in school, plan for college, and stay away from gangs.

FUTURE PLANS

TYP staff are fundraising to build a mentor connection for Two Stars. Ten volunteers already have signed up to receive training. With more funding, the school would enlist the Two Stars services daily to work with youth at risk. More resources would allow the program to provide conflict management tools to help youth deal with what it means to be a Native American in a community where racism and discrimination exist. Youth are requesting more field trips during the year and an improved summer camp with more supplies and access to a camp-

ground that features Native culture and crafts. TYP staff members hope to have a Boys & Girls Clubs just for Native youth. A youth center would provide private space for youth to explore Native culture and to be themselves.

Professional development would help Two Stars staff offer new strategies for dealing with anger issues, as well as activities that develop self-identity through Native traditions and history. And, a bigger staff would give the program time to build stronger community partnerships, such as with the local law enforcement agency and elders.





MESCALERO APACHE TRIBE, NEW MEXICO

The Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation is located in the forests of Otero County in south-central New Mexico, surrounded by mountains revered as sacred by the tribe. The reservation has a population of approximately 4,440.

BACKGROUND

The name “Mescalero” comes from Spaniards who remarked on the abundant use of the mescal plant in preparing a staple Apache food. In 1873, Ulysses S. Grant established the reservation for the 400 or so Mescalero Apache who survived confrontations with the U.S. Army. In 1903, members of the Lipan Apache band, and in 1913, 200 members of the Chiricahua band of Apache were relocated to the Mescalero reservation. Over the years, the three bands have intermarried, and under the Indian Reorganization Act, all became members of the Mescalero Apache Tribe as formalized by Congress in 1936. The Mescalero Apache government rules under a constitution and has been a Federally Chartered Corporation since 1936. The tribal council has 10 members who are elected annually by popular vote.

Approximately 65 percent of tribal members have graduated high school, and under two percent have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. The tribe's economy consists of a casino and resort, a telecom firm, a cattle operation, timber mills, and a ski resort. Revenue generated from the tribe's businesses is applied to assets that serve the community, such as a new K-12 school and senior health care facility.

MESCALERO APACHE TYP

The Mescalero Prevention Program has received OJJDP funding since 2003, using it to provide a biweekly life skills class, a graduation requirement for students at



Mescalero Apache High School, and an afterschool program serving 35 middle and high school youth. In the afterschool program, youth meet from 4 to 7 p.m. daily in a community center shared with the local Boys & Girls Club, which serves younger children. Ninth-grade students make up the largest cohort of youth reached by the TYP. Educational field trips and supervised recreation time are scheduled on most weekends.

The prevention program tracks progress and changes in individual youth behavior using a state-approved instrument. Evaluation of data collected from the instrument revealed that the Mescalero Apache youth, unlike youth from other TYPs covered in this report show much lower levels of risk factors (perception of harm, non-parent adult support, drug availability in the community, etc.) and higher scores on resiliency factors.

The TYP staff has successfully reached out to school staff and community members, amassing in five years more than 60 partner programs and school districts in a coalition to serve tribal youth. Youth interviewed say they bring respect and an open mind to the prevention program, because it provides experiences their families cannot provide, such as field trips to the Grand Canyon, SeaWorld,

Carlsbad Caverns, and the Albuquerque Balloon Festival. Under the watchful eye of program staff, youth make friends, play, and tutor other youth.

The Prevention Program has adopted a portion of Route 70 that runs through the reservation, removing litter on scheduled pickup days. Youth collect roadside debris, separating out alcohol- and tobacco-related trash. Through this project, they earn credit toward the 80 hours of community service needed to graduate high school.

A summer program called Youth Impacting Youth (YIY) partnered with the TYP to train youth in one week to produce a professional video on a crime prevention topic. YIY engaged youth in team-building exercises and then divided them into production companies. Each team developed a mission statement, a company logo, a script, and a storyboard, and they received instruction in acting and filming. YIY staff handled final editing. The TYP and its partners covered the \$300-per-student cost and provided meals and snacks. Staff and youth say the YIY project provided opportunities for youth to develop career skills and work products that can be viewed on the Web by potential employers. Some parents of participating youth enroll in the preven-

tion program's Dare to Be You, a 10-week parenting class that helps adults develop decision-making skills, assertiveness, responsibility, and self-esteem.

Funding for Mescalero Apache TYP comes mainly from the TYP grant and fundraisers conducted by staff and youth participants. Fundraising efforts include involving youth in creating holiday baskets throughout the year and food booths during ceremonies.

FUTURE PLANS

The TYP staff are looking at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Drug-Free Community grant and considering collaboration with the local Workforce Investment Act program to expand the

program, as they would like to be able to serve more youth. The team wants to start a Teen Court and establish a hotline for youth to report crime. A drug court may be started, which will help with prevention efforts. Because the local school district does not have a system to deal with truancy, future plans include starting a mentoring program for youth who need extra guidance.





Youth Views

In interviews with youth about their experiences in their tribe's TYP, a number of themes emerged. As detailed below, they commented that participation benefits them as follows: It (1) gives them opportunities to use their time productively, (2) helps them learn about their culture, (3) creates opportunities for them, (4) helps them avoid negative behaviors and manage their problems, and (5) helps them improve school performance.

TYP GIVES YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES TO USE THEIR TIME PRODUCTIVELY

When interviewed, youth ages 10 to 17 said that if they were not in the program, they would be spending time alone watching TV or playing video games. Some even admitted that they would be drinking or engaging in risky behaviors. In Old Harbor, Alaska, for example, the TYP is the only youth-based programming in the village. Before its introduction, there was little for youth to do besides homework, watch TV, play video games, and stand on the dock watching boats pass by.

TYP HELPS YOUTH LEARN ABOUT THEIR CULTURE AND RECONNECT WITH FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

When describing what they enjoyed most about the program, many youth reported that it exposed them to opportunities to learn about their Native heritage and language, and to go beyond the tribe to explore the world. Youth described their appreciation for spending time with elders and adults. For example, in the Grand Ronde Youth Canoe Club, partici-

pants seek acceptance by adults for their skills and talents in cultural activities. A 15-year-old male participant said, *"It's good to show that youth are still into their culture. We see a lot of people stop and look at the canoes."*

Based on their experience, Youth Canoe Club participants described how participating in preparations for the canoe journey taught them how to be part of a team and get along with others. Grand Ronde youth also learned to apply the concepts of respect, balance, and cooperation in their canoe journey preparation, values that will continue to help them throughout their lives.

Mille Lacs Community Youth Services TYP youth have confidence and know how to express themselves, something that can be a great challenge for Native youth who have found a way to survive by being silent and invisible. The CYS uses the sweat lodge as a counseling session to relax youth, build trust, and provide time for healing. A 14-year-old girl said, *"The program helps me learn about my culture and spend more time with my grandparents. I have been dancing at powwows and I just made my first dancing shawl.... In the heat of the sweat lodge, troubles melt away. It clears your mind. I think the program should get more kids into it and they will stop their bad habits. I try to tell my friends, but older kids may not come because they may have other priorities."*

TYP HELPS CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH

By participating in TYP activities, youth said they received opportunities in their communities. For example, a 14-year-old girl from Grand Ronde described how

participating in cultural activities opened doors for her: *"While we were dancing, a lady came up to me and asked me how old I was and what grade I was in. Later she came up and asked me if I would go to the preschool and show the little kids the dances and if I would work in a youth employment job this summer."*

Mescalero Apache TYP youth are venturing out and gaining experiences that strengthen their knowledge and life skills. Youth described their excitement over the field trips they have enjoyed, which take them beyond the borders of the reservation, as well as the exercise and the homework guidance they have received. Said one boy, *"We learn about drugs and ways to prevent people from using them. We have fundraisers to go on trips. I learn things I never thought of."*

TYP HELPS YOUTH AVOID NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS AND MANAGE THEIR PROBLEMS

Youth said their participation in TYP gave them a resource for avoiding negative behaviors and managing their problems. As a 14-year-old boy commented, *"I would be drinking if I were not in this program. I had a long-term drinking problem. I was locked up for two years. Through the program, I have learned patience, and during sweats, pray for taking pain away from other people. During the breaks, in between the doors, the elders talk and we listen. If someone has something to pray about, we pray. In there, everyone is brother and sister... In the past, I was lost, but I've learned a lot of culture and I want to start an AA club in the area for kids my age."*

Said one 16-year-old boy: *"The program is very helpful to people, not just youth, for the*

healing process and for learning your own culture. It helps me personally. People come there for healing who may have had problems with their families, in addition to drugs or alcohol. The drum and outfit making is part of healing. There is not a time when we are not laughing. Maybe that is why it is such a good feeling. It might come from a negative thing that has happened to you recently... The program puts you on the right track—to respect people and forgive, pray for, and try to help others. In the sweat lodge, we all contribute. We all teach the little ones different songs. I invite others to a sweat lodge. It is their decision to come or not. It is like asking someone to go to church.”

TYP HELPS YOUTH IMPROVE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Tribal Youth Programs collaborate with schools and often share program staff and space. One TYP cultural advisor described truancy as the biggest problem at school and cited the TYP program as working with schools to re-engage students.

One boy on the Mescalero Apache Reservation was among those who related how his participation in TYP helped him in school: “They feed us healthy food and drinks. They also talk to us about our grades and behavior. Since I started [the TYP], my grades started to go up.” Said another boy from the same community, “We exercise every week. We talk about drugs, everyday things, and college. I will go to college when I graduate from high school.”

A third boy in the same program commented: “We do one hour of homework every day. After that, we do a fun activity, and arts and crafts. Even exercise is fun...we do a lot of fundraisers to earn money to buy things the program needs like exercise equipment, fishing poles, and tents for camping.”

The Absentee Shawnee Tribe’s TYP staff work after school with middle school students. In the program, youth enjoy a snack as they describe trouble with teachers and listen attentively to advice from adults. The overall sense from youth regarding their TYP is that it is something that belongs to them; it provides a safe

place to visit with friends, vent concerns to caring adults, receive help with schoolwork, and learn about Native culture and language.

In sum, the youth who participate in the TYPs described in this report cited the productive use of their time, the opportunity to learn about their cultures, the opportunities created by the programs, the ability to deal with negative behavior and manage their problems, and an improvement in their school performance as benefits of the programs they valued. The TYP programs provide activities that youth describe as both fun and useful.





Themes of Success

In interviews with TYP staff about the successes of TYP in the five communities visited, three major themes emerged: (1) building capacity, expanding services, and coordinating resources through partnerships, (2) funding and sustainability, and (3) restoring Native identity by honoring culture and tradition.

BUILDING CAPACITY, EXPANDING SERVICES, AND COORDINATING RESOURCES THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Successful TYPs serve at-risk youth by building support through local partnerships and connecting to tribal, state, and regional networks. The TYPs described in this report are plugged into the community, and their leaders seek out opportunities to build capacity by reaching out to others. They serve as ambassadors and advocates for youth, procuring venues for collaboration on community projects, supplies, and resources for activities, health services, and political support for funding and meaningful opportunities for youth to serve the community. Tribal advisory boards are also recruited to develop and coordinate plans to serve at-risk youth and reduce juvenile crime.

Successful TYPs see health care as part of the continuum of services. TYP staff serve as role models of a healthy family, demonstrating an alternative to negative behaviors. Some staff interviewed pointed out that some at-risk youth may not have experienced what a healthy family is or understand how it operates. Through exposure to healthy family experiences and activities sponsored by the TYP, youth learn how to be healthy people and break the cycle of abuse and addiction in their lives.

Depending on the tribe, tribal council leaders may get involved with the TYP at the ground level or stay on the periphery. Some tribal council members support the TYP by purchasing equipment and attending activities, speaking at prevention and leadership conferences, and interacting with youth directly during visits to the program's activities. Some tribal leaders have children or relatives who participate in the TYP.

Collaboration with community partners is a necessity and allows TYPs to build program capacity for delivering services, attain youth referrals, increase visibility within the community, connect to funding streams, and tap into other resources. In larger tribal communities, TYPs are joining with other national programs such as the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and mentorship efforts to strengthen programming. Law enforcement officers are excellent sources for referrals to the program, and they often are invited to TYP trainings and events to break down barriers among youth and adults who may perceive the police as cynical or hostile.

FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

The TYP grant provides the core funding for TYP programs. Some programs do not receive a youth prevention budget from their tribe, although other in-kind support may be provided. According to the TYP staff interviewed, another significant source of Federal funding to support their TYP is the SAMHSA grant. SAMSHA grants may be used for mental illness and substance abuse prevention, treatment, and recovery support programs. They fund culturally appropriate programs addressing issues such as suicide prevention programs in schools, programs for children and youth with severe emotional disturbances, and alcohol- and methamphetamine-abuse prevention programs.

For some TYPs, tribal council contributes in-kind resources such as program facilities and staff time. For example, the Grand Ronde tribal council has instituted a policy to reduce the administrative indirect costs for tribal programs to allow more dollars to go directly to youth service.





vices. This policy makes it possible for the TYP and its partners to apply for private foundation grants that often restrict indirect costs to fewer than 15 percent of the total funds requested. The Mille Lacs TYP has supplemented its TYP grant with two community service state block grants targeted to combat poverty. In addition, revenue generated by the tribe's casino and businesses provides extra support. Community partners of the Mille Lacs TYP, including the tribal school system, provide in-kind support such as office or activity space.

To sustain funding for TYP programming, the tribes profiled here have sought funds from a variety of sources beyond the federal government. They have sought grants that support social economic development, native language preservation, posttreatment services, and methamphetamine and other drug and alcohol

prevention services. State grants received by some TYPs are funds passed from Federal sources, including tobacco prevention and/or alcohol and drug prevention dollars. Some state grants cover only prevention activities and do not support funding for treatment, making them less flexible to use. All TYPs interviewed are engaged in some form of local fundraising events such as car washes, a talent contest, and craft and bake sales.

The Old Harbor TYP annual budget is supported by a complicated combination of Federal, state, tribal, and private grants and donations. The tribe covers some of the program director's position with support from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Some program costs are covered by funding from a Native American Housing and Self Determination Act grant awarded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Donations

come from the regional nonprofit association KANA and the regional for-profit Koniag Inc. A grant from the State of Alaska's Department of Health and Human Services Early Intervention and Prevention Program provides professional development support.

Funding is less complicated at the Mes-calero Apache Prevention Program, where staff and youth work year-round to raise money to supplement their TYP grant. They do not receive a budget from the tribe. Youth-led fundraising occurs during holidays when they create festive baskets for sale. Their fundraising profits pay for field trips to a variety of locations in and out of state. Similarly, the Absentee Shawnee Two Stars program operates exclusively through the support of the TYP grant and from fundraising events held throughout the year by TYP participants.

RESTORING NATIVE IDENTITY BY HONORING CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

Building Native identity is a prevention measure used by the TYPs profiled in this report to reach youth, engage them in activities, and get them to participate regularly in the programs. Many TYPs use cultural advisors to serve as role models and resources for language and tribal traditions. TYPs also rely on the support of elders to help the programs support Native traditions and language. The cultural content of the TYP programs described in this report are meaningful to youth participants and help them connect their lives and choices to the traditions and culture of their respective communities.



Recommendations

Through interviews conducted for this report, TYP leaders and staff offered recommendations for Federal and state policymakers, agency staff, and practitioners operating or considering a tribal youth program. Recommendations focused on training, technical assistance and technology, communication with agencies, evaluation, funding, and program needs.

TRAINING, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND TECHNOLOGY

Improve TYP training by providing knowledge of best practices and fresh ideas to attract youth, especially older youth, to activities. TYP leaders and staff recommended training that will:

- Demonstrate or describe what leading TYPs have accomplished;
- Include ways to integrate more Native American beliefs;
- Provide examples of experiential learning that is culture driven;
- Provide program facilitation skills;
- Provide grant writing and fundraising

tips; and

- Provide public relation skills, tips on keeping the community informed, and practice working with the media.

Provide leadership training that serves both youth and adults. It was suggested that youth be included in training workshop or conference planning committees. Staff talked about seeking out role models for youth and inviting them to speak at regional trainings or TYP conferences.

Cultivate qualified staff from within. No feeder system has been established to reach professionals who work in a TYP. Finding qualified, acculturated staff in rural areas is both time-consuming and challenging for programs. A certification process or degree program vetted through the Tribal Colleges could help prepare entry-level, mid-career, or second-career American Indian and Alaska Natives to work in the justice or prevention field. Federal agencies should consider working with tribes to spearhead an initiative to reach out to Tribal College staff, inviting them to TYP trainings, and

fostering partnerships between TYP and the Tribal Colleges. It would be beneficial to “grow” qualified staff from within the tribe by helping tribes invest in existing staff through incentives for certifications and continuing education that supports program goals.

Provide cultural sensitivity training for those in public service working with tribes. State and local policymakers and administration staff that interface with tribes should receive training on Native American culture, history, and the landscape in which tribes live when creating or updating policies that involve tribes.

Use technology to provide training. Given the remote location of many tribes, federal agencies should provide for technology or computer upgrades to help programs improve their communications and training. For example, TYPs could receive technical assistance or training through online meetings and communications with other agencies and programs. Technology could be used to help provide information on program sustainability through important program updates, funding opportunities, accessing volunteer staff assistance from other programs, and allowing TYP programs to share best practices.

COMMUNICATION WITH AGENCIES

Work across departments and agencies to coordinate grant notices, related trainings, and professional development. There already is an effort through an OJP initiative to bring together agencies that work with tribes, but this is not yet reaching some in the field. Agencies should endeavor to coordinate the re-



lease of requests for proposals or grant announcements to help build program sustainability, because Federal funding is currently the main resource for tribal programs.

States should improve their communication with tribes about tribal programs receiving state grants or Federal pass-through dollars. Oregon is a good example of a state working closely with tribes. Since 2001, Oregon has operated on a government-to-government relationship with Oregon tribes. As a result, the state has developed a system that provides liaisons to tribes for assistance with translation and interpretation of Federal and state funding and reporting requirements. The state's technical assistance helps tribes translate terminology featured in requests for proposals and program outcome reports.

EVALUATION

Improve the coordination across reporting systems at the Federal and state levels for tracking data, strategies, and outcomes for TYPs and other youth programs. Staff then would need to learn only one system.

Maintain flexible program measure reporting requirements. TYP leaders and staff suggested that Federal and state policymakers and agency staff should be sensitive when considering the implementation and data collection of programs that are culturally based. Some tribes are inhibited from pursuing Federal grants because initiatives developed by those in Indian Country are rare to non-existent among listings of best practice models approved by the Federal Government which makes it difficult for tribes to select programs that are sensitive to their needs. Tribes should have more time to design their own research and evaluation tools using culturally appropriate methods. Federal and state agencies should acknowledge that tribes often need and want to develop culturally-based prevention and treatment services and not limit them to government lists of best practices.

FUNDING

Extend the grant period to no less than five years or even a 10-year period. As many grants are short-term, program leaders and staff spend a great deal of program time seeking other funding sources to sustain programs. It takes time for the community to embrace a program, see its benefits, and invest in sustaining it.

Lower the indirect cost rate for grant awards. TYP leaders and staff recommended that the tribes lower the indirect cost rate for grant awards. Many tribes do not have an established tax base that provides an infrastructure of services and, as a result, cannot compete for grants with counties and universities whose established systems afford a far lower indirect cost. In some cases, tribal program indirect rates (utilities, rent, administrative tasks, etc.) can be as high as 50 percent. Grant or award requirements that impose restrictions on a tribe's indirect cost rate hurt their ability to compete for grants.

Be aware of the limitation of support for social programs. TYP leaders and staff stressed that Federal, state, and local policymakers need to be aware that a casino on the reservation does not guar-

antee greater funding for youth services. Most tribes do not provide direct funding to the TYP. Rather, in-kind support from the tribal government will sometimes cover equipment, vehicles, staff support, and facilities.

PROGRAM NEEDS

Support Transportation. One of the most common areas underfunded is reliable, fuel-efficient transportation for youth to get to and from TYP activities. Fuel-efficient buses or vans to transport youth would improve the lives of those who must negotiate rides or walk home at night. The rising costs of transportation and fuel are barriers to providing services and getting the support of rural families to attend TYP activities.

Expand TYP to a general audience of American Indian/Alaska Native youth. One tribal leader recommended that federally-funded programs address the needs of not just troubled youth, but all youth. The program target of at-risk youth creates a stigma for the youth who participate, and families may not want the TYP service because they do not want others to know that the youth have problems.





Conclusion

Often the only afterschool and weekend youth service provider on the reservation, the Tribal Youth Program, we found, is usually the center of the community. This perhaps is because TYPs reach out to engage families and build networks of local partnerships of support among tribal leaders, elders, and members. The program, with its focus on Native culture and language, appeals to tribal members who see the renewal of Native pride through the resurrection and application of cultural beliefs, values, and traditions, to the benefit of the community. The TYPs featured in this report have found a way to empower youth to lead the community in activities that build a sense of attachment to heritage, promote belonging, and support personal development. The TYP serves as a healthy alternative to negative activities and risky behaviors that provide a breeding ground for substance abuse and gang-related activity.

Some practitioners view the program as an incubator for emerging tribal leaders. And in larger tribal communities, to strengthen programming and build leadership among youth, some TYPs are joining with other national programs such as the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and coordinating programming around men-

torship, service and youth leadership efforts. At least one TYP interviewed plans to apply to the Corporation for National and Community Service for a VISTA (Volunteer in Service to America) volunteer grant to build program capacity.

Tribal Youth Programs focus on prevention and intervention, concentrating on youth development and building civic and life skills as well as providing exposure to career-related skills that allow at-risk youth the means to function and succeed on and off tribal lands.

More specifically, youth, families, and the tribal community enjoy a number of benefits:

- Fewer youth engage in risky behaviors that require the attention and resources of the police, sheriff's departments, schools, and courts;
- Regularly scheduled activities are held in a safe environment that (1) engage youth and their families in Native culture and language and (2) provide an alternative to unsupervised time that can lead to delinquency, underage drinking, unprotected sex, and other risky behavior;
- Life skills are learned as youth engage in and lead projects that make a difference in the community;

- At-risk youth are transformed from the ones being helped to the ones helping others;
- Youth break the cycle of abuse in their lives as they spend time with and receive guidance from caring adults that help them make informed decision and/or choices that help them plan for their future;
- Greater trust, learning and healing among youth and families; and
- Opportunities for intergenerational collaboration.

Finally, it is the author's recommendation to support the expansion of the TYP to serve as a growing, living network and resource for tribes in their pursuit to reconnect youth to the community. Because the TYP touches many sectors of a youth's life, before, during, after school and into the summer months, it would serve as a natural center for youth development for all tribal youth, not only to prevent criminal behavior through redirection, but intentionally strengthen academic and non-academic skills, including leadership and a connection to careers, with an emphasis on Native history, culture, and intergenerational relationships. Through coordinated efforts with other federal agencies that provide grants to tribes, TYP could expand further to serve youth and tribal communities.

Appendix 1: **NOTE ON METHODOLOGY**

This report, prepared by the American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) in partnership with OJJDP, provides preliminary findings on how TYPs are succeeding in improving the lives of at-risk youth and strengthening families in tribal communities. The information is based on site visits, focus groups, and individual interviews conducted in 2007 and 2008. Before visiting the communities, the AYPF researcher received approval from an Institutional Review Board through OJJDP's Evaluation Management contractor, CSR, Incorporated.

The study was an exploratory attempt to capture a snapshot of TYPs that have been operating for at least six years and from a variety of regions across the United States; all programs included have been working with TYP grants since 2003. AYPF held formal interviews with 137 individuals, including program staff, community partners, tribal elders, tribal council members, parents, and youth in five different tribal communities: the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Oregon; Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Minnesota; Old Harbor Village, Alaska; the Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Oklahoma; and the Mescalero Apache Tribe, New Mexico. The communities were selected by OJJDP program managers for their geographic diversity and program maturity.

Each site visit was conducted over three to four days with two interviewers, an AYPF staff member and an OJJDP TYP program manager, and included a tour of the reservation, interviews, and observations of TYP activities. The interviews were conducted with individuals and groups, using a formal qualitative method of inquiry and a prepared list of questions to acquire an "insider's" perspective of the program. Interviews were conducted with TYP staff, youth participants, parents, tribal leaders, elders, program partners, and community members. Site visits were scheduled according to the convenience of TYP staff.

The TYP program directors selected participants for interviews, including 55 youth, 16 elders, 42 TYP staff and partners (including tribal council members), and 24 parents and other adults. Conversations were recorded and program materials collected. The findings and recommendations are based on information gathered from direct program observation, program materials, and data collected through interviews. Observations included youth participating in discussions and engaging in activities. Signed consent and assent forms were collected from individuals participating in the interviews.

Interview questions were prepared, adapted for each focus group, and sent to tribes in advance of each visit. Questions addressed: (1) a general overview of the program and program services, (2) program capacity and infrastructure, (3) use of volunteers, (4) funding, (5) youth participants, and (6) perceived impact on youth and the community. Program staff and tribal leaders were asked how the TYP has improved services for youth by (a) instituting or adjusting policies that affect organizational structure, and (b) leveraging resources, such as grants, volunteers, donations, and other funding streams. Some answers were obtained through information packets provided by the TYP.

The limitations of the research are that, while a Native American supervised the study, the field research was conducted and written by a non-Indian. The number of representatives (five tribes) interviewed for the study is relatively low. For a more comprehensive view of the program, further research should be conducted with more tribes that receive TYP grant funding.

The Hopi tribe was originally included in the sites to be involved in the report; however, due to scheduling issues the assessment timeline could not be met.

Appendix 2: **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF GRAND RONDE, OREGON

<http://www.grandronde.org/>

Youth Canoe Club

<http://www.grandronde.org/template.aspx?id=6890>

Youth Education

<http://www.grandronde.org/template.aspx?id=3932>

MILLE LACS BAND OF OJIBWE, MINNESOTA

<http://www.millelacsojibwe.org/>

Newsroom

http://www.millelacsojibwe.org/Page_FactSheet_ServingOurCommunity.aspx

OLD HARBOR VILLAGE, ALASKA

<http://www.oldharbornativecorp.com/>

ABSENTEE SHAWNEE TRIBE, OKLAHOMA

<http://www.atribe.com/>

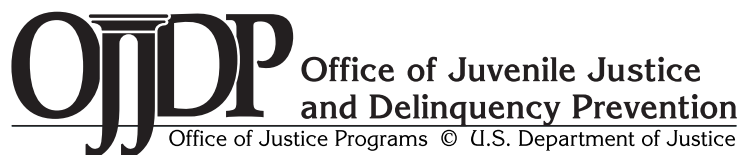
Two Stars Program

<http://www.atribe.com/FamilyServices.html>

MESCALERO APACHE TRIBE, NEW MEXICO

<http://www.mescaleroapache.com/>

Mescalero Apache School
<http://www.maschiefs.org/>



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