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Media Contact

Kristin Rodine

Public Information Officer

208-332-6807

krodine@sde.idaho.gov

Idaho Indian Education Summit aims to increase cultural understanding

(BOISE) – On Aug. 1, more than 100 educators, policymakers and tribal leaders will gather in Boise to promote equity and best practices for teaching American Indian students by identifying strategies and gathering cultural knowledge.

The daylong 2018 Idaho Indian Education Summit at Boise State University will feature varied workshops and teacher-track sessions, with topics including “Defining Equity,” “Tribal-Public School Partnerships,” and “Elements of Culturally Responsive Teaching.” A panel of American Indian college students will share their experiences about the transition from high school to higher education.

[Online registration](#) for the summit, “Redressing Cultural Capital,” will be accepted through July 25. The cost is \$75, and participants can earn continuing education credit.

“American Indian tribes are essential to the history and culture of Idaho, and these summits offer a great opportunity to infuse Idaho education with cultural knowledge and understanding for the benefit of all students,” said Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra, who will welcome participants at the Boise summit.

The summit aims to help Idaho educators learn about the state’s five federally recognized tribes – Coeur d’Alene, Kootenai, Nez Perce, Shoshone-Bannock and Shoshone Paiute -- and devise strategies and methods to increase cultural sensitivity and benefit students of all backgrounds. Sponsors include the State Department of Education, Office of the State Board of Education, the Idaho Indian Education Committee, the tribes and Idaho’s higher education institutions.

The Boise summit aims to serve educators and others from the Treasure Valley and surrounding areas. Two other regional summits earlier this summer focused on the same mission for North Idaho and Southeast Idaho.

“These summits provide opportunities for teachers to learn more about the history and culture of Idaho’s tribes and to more effectively teach our history standards in their classrooms,” said Linda Clark, president of the State Board of Education. “Regional summits also make it possible for all teachers to participate.”

Educators bring their own perspectives and attitudes to the classroom and students through their teaching methods, classroom décor and the language they use. One purpose of the Indian Education Summit is to expand teaching strategies and methods to recognize and benefit from the “cultural capital” – experiences, language and culture – of American Indian students, said Johanna Jones, who heads the SDE’s Office of Indian Education.

“Perhaps the greatest opportunity of teaching American Indian populations is that teachers gain incredible, authentic knowledge by transcending their comfort zones and establishing new ways to connect the background of students to learning,” Jones said. “Teaching ethnically and culturally diverse students is no different than teaching any other students: It just involves knowing your students.”

Summit participants will receive a copy of the new book “United Voices: Awakening Cultural Understandings of Idaho’s Five Tribes.” Available through the State Department of Education, “United Voices” offers in-depth information on the history and culture of the tribes through the voices of tribal members.

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Attachment: Agenda for the Aug. 1 Idaho Indian Education summit in Boise.