

# Native Youth Mentorship Programs

**Vision Statement:** Native youth thrive with support from a caring mentor who notices them and their potential.

## Background

Mentors offer Native youth guidance, support, experience, and much-needed encouragement from a trusted adult in their community at a critical time for achieving academic and personal goals. Having steady, positive influences can serve as a major catalyst for growth and accomplishment a person's life. Access to mentors can lead to increased confidence and self-esteem, improved academic performance and relationships, and help a child realize their true potential.



**42% of Native Club kids & teens report that “when something important goes wrong in my life, I just can’t stop worrying about it.”**

**The National Youth Mentoring Initiative** is a critical grant program administered at the Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). Boys & Girls Clubs have long recognized the need and importance of mentors in the lives of America's youth and utilize high-quality mentoring programming to serve more than **34,000** youth and teens in all **50** states.

## Native Clubs Approach

As the nation's largest youth service provider for Native youth, Native Clubs meet the needs of local communities across the country, keeping young people safe, providing opportunities for improving academic success and building character and leadership skills, which helps increase youth resiliency and reduces high-risk activity. Native Clubs leverage BGCA's nationwide network to connect youth with caring mentors in their community along with positive youth development and culturally relevant skill-building programs.

The National Youth Mentoring Program helps strengthen, expand, and enhance mentoring curriculum for Native Club members. Funds are used to promote positive outcomes and reduce the potential impact of poverty, community violence, gang activity and incarcerated parents for youth who attend or are referred to a Boys & Girls Club.

Native Boys & Girls Clubs utilize a combination of group and one-on-one mentorship approaches, foster the development of peer-to-peer relationships, strengthen the development of critical social skills and establish close connections to the participants' communities.



We ask Congress to expand access to positive adult mentors and culturally relevant programming for Native youth by supporting **\$120 million** for the Department of Justice **National Youth Mentoring Program** in the FY 2022 Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations bill.

## Youth Mentoring is Effective

The National Mentoring Partnership along with Boys & Girls Clubs of America's National Youth Outcome Initiative report confirms the positive impact mentoring has on young people, to help them succeed in school, work, and life. Young adults who had a mentor are:



\*Older teens with optimal Club experience.

## Native Youth Mentoring & The Opioid Epidemic



Mentors can **help prevent** early drug use and are **instrumental support systems** when youth are dealing with addiction or the impacts of substance use disorder (SUD) of parents and other adults in their lives.

## Native Success Story

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the **Red Lake Nation Boys & Girls Club, Minnesota** utilized multiple virtual platforms to connect with members. Club staff utilized BGCA's MyFuture web platform to continue to implement their OJJDP Mentoring Program virtually so Club members would still have access to mentors in a safe and secure space. The Club also used their social media accounts to advertise special mentoring events, which ultimately **doubled** the number of Native youth served from what the Club was able to serve before the pandemic. Throughout the program, mentors also observed that smaller groups made youth more comfortable to share deeper connections and hold more open conversations.



The Club also experienced great success implementing cultural mentoring programming, which included: big and little drum lessons, learning Ojibwe traditional dances and Pow Wow Zumba with Native fitness instructors. In addition to furthering the Club members' connection with their culture and peers, the virtual program also hosted Elders from the Tribe to share Native heritage. As the Club has begun to return to in-person programming, Club CEO Thomas Barrett hopes to continue increasing the number of Native youth served through their OJJDP Mentoring Program and looks to further expand Club services in their community.

<sup>1</sup> Boys & Girls Clubs of America's National Youth Outcome Initiative Report. (2020).

<sup>2</sup> National Mentoring Partnership Data. (2014). [https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/The\\_Mentoring\\_Effect\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/The_Mentoring_Effect_Executive_Summary.pdf)