

## National Native American Mentoring Program

In 2004, the Navajo Nation, a federally recognized tribe located in the states of New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah, received a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to develop a unique National Native American Mentoring Program that specifically addresses the issue of children whose parent(s) are incarcerated in tribal, state, or federal prisons. Building on the strong network of Boys & Girls Clubs located in Indian Country, the Navajo Nation teamed with local Boys & Girls Clubs to establish and implement the National Native American Mentoring Program over a three-year period.

The result: more than 400 youth were matched with a caring adult mentor by the end of the project period. The mentoring program was grounded in each Club's philosophy of positive youth development, organizational infrastructure, and appropriate personnel designated to coordinate and supervise the program. There was a steady interest on the part of Boys & Girls Clubs in Indian Country to expand upon this mentoring model. In 2007, the National Congress of American Indians agreed to embark on an endeavor to develop a program open to all youth in need of a positive role model and extra attention, regardless of their family background. Funding to establish this three-year initiative was awarded to the National Congress of American Indians through the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in 2007. In 2010, the program received Department of Justice funding for expansion and continuation for an additional three years.



While the National Congress of American Indians administers the entire project, the partnership includes 23 Boys & Girls Club organizations located in the states of Arizona, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Washington. Club staff members are trained by Dr. Susan Weinberger, President of Mentor Consulting Group (MCG). MCG's Train-the-Trainer Model has proven to be an effective approach that enables local programs to effectively train their own mentors. Additional training and technical assistance is provided by Sources of Strength Inc., a consulting and training corporation specializing in mentoring and building effective teen-adult partnerships to prevent suicide, violence, and substance abuse in tribal and rural communities.

Each local Boys & Girls Club has identified a Mentor Program Coordinator to oversee the Club's mentoring program, including supervision, oversight, and monitoring of the mentors and mentees. All program coordinators are trained to be responsible for identifying youth; recruiting, training, and supervising mentors; and most importantly, monitoring the relationships between the mentors and mentees. A training manual has also been adapted for specific use by the 23 Club sites.

Additionally, the National Congress of American Indians works with FirstPic, Inc., a consulting firm that has been instrumental in establishing Boys & Girls Clubs in Indian Country since 1996 and has overseen several national program initiatives in Indian Country. FirstPic, Inc.'s strong relationships and nationwide knowledge of Boys & Girls Clubs in Indian Country facilitates the implementation of the National Native American Mentoring Program.

