

North Idaho College Indian Alliance Earns \$10,000 Grant

By [Jack McNeel](#) February 21, 2011



Photo courtesy North Idaho College

Pictured, from left, are Dave LaSarte, CEO of Coeur d'Alene Resort/Casino; Tim Clark, Student Alliance president; Ryan Carden, former Student Alliance president; Evanlene Melting Tallow, student advisor; Millie Douglas, alliance vice president; and Tom Davidson, director of golf at Circling Raven.

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Enthusiasm and excitement was sky high recently when students of the [American Indian Student Alliance](#) at [North Idaho College](#) (NIC), in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, were notified they had been awarded a \$10,000 Challenge Grant from the [American Indian Education Foundation](#) (AIEF). "I'll tell you, it got a huge cheer," Evanlene Melting Tallow, American Indian student advisor said, "They were high-fiving each other."

AIEF is part of [National Relief Charities](#) and the Challenge Grant is one of its programs. NIC was awarded the grant last year but had to raise money to receive matching money from AIEF. Their goal was \$10,000 and they only had from early fall till February 1 to raise it. That's a lot of money for students from a junior college to raise in such a short time. But they did. The matching grant will bring the fund to over \$20,000.

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Lyn Tysdal, program manager with AIEF, visited the campus in mid-February to meet with the students and staff. “I was absolutely amazed and impressed that the students have done this, that the students made the decision to raise the money for additional scholarships. What really, really impressed me, this is a first-year grant for this school and the students put together a business plan. Their graphic design student put together graphics for it and they were able to pull in that money for the first year and add it to the Challenge Grant. That was absolutely amazing.”

It was the student members who made the decision to establish a scholarship program to help future Native students entering college. Evanlene explained, “Their philosophy was they didn’t want a handout, they wanted a hand up. They could have used the money for conferences or any way they wanted but they decided to start the scholarship.”

“One thing I liked about all this was the students’ passion and desire to leave something to help other Native students after they leave. It’s building that community,” Evanlene said, “to see other Native students be successful and help them along so they don’t have to take out so many loans, especially students who fall through the cracks. Descendants who are not able to apply for scholarships because they don’t have enough blood quantum to be enrolled.”

This grant works perfectly. As Tysdal explained, “Our grants are all about sustainability. For instance, the Challenge Grant, after we’re with the school for three years we expect it to be a sustainable grant. The students have already put in a sustainable piece. That is what is so cool. They’ve got that golf tournament at Circling Raven which is going to be going on yearly now.”

The students expect to see equal or better amounts raised each of the next two years of the Challenge Grant program. The largest fundraiser is a golf scramble in conjunction with Circling Raven Golf Club and the Coeur d’Alene Tribe. Timing limited the number of golfers to 48 last fall but expectations are high to double that number this year for the golf scramble on September 30. At \$100 per golfer the funds add up quickly. The first scholarships will be awarded for the semester beginning next fall. Applications are being accepted now and Evanlene said “at least \$15,000” will be given out.

Rayelle Anderson, director of development at NIC, pointed out the school, “made it a priority to ensure our American Indian students have the support and resources they need to be successful while they’re here and beyond. American Indian students interested in attending NIC should submit a NIC Foundation scholarship application.” The website is www.nic.edu and has a link for current and future students. Click the scholarship link and go to the scholarship application to fill out and submit. Priority deadline is March 14 but students can apply at any time.

Anderson also commented, “We have an American Indian studies program. We’re very proud of that as well. We’re building more connections and agreements with other education institutions so that degree articulates very easily.”

Tysdal summed up this Challenge Grant award by saying, “The students told me how they put this project together. I was like, ‘wow’. This is wonderful. This is what our program is about. We look for students that are going to be able to make change within their communities. These students are already doing it by combining their education with that community change. It just blew me away. I was really, really impressed.”

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