Dear Friend:

Thank you for your interest in the American Indian College Fund, a non-profit working for 30 tribal colleges and universities and their 26,000 students.

Tribally-controlled colleges have been created by American Indians to serve Indian students and communities. Located mostly on poor, isolated Indian reservations with high unemployment, the colleges are fighting the nation's worst rates of educational failure and poverty. My tribe, the Oglala Sioux Tribe, founded Oglala Lakota College on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota.

Despite the challenges, tribal colleges have remarkable success rates. While fewer than 10 percent of Indian students who leave reservations for public colleges graduate, more than 40 percent of graduates at tribal colleges pursue further education. Another 50 percent find jobs.

Tribal colleges succeed because they serve Indian students like no other institution. Historically, "Indian education" was about assimilation--with tribal culture shunned, it meant failure. At tribal colleges, though, culture is at the center of the curriculum. Students take accredited courses like science alongside those in tribal language. In biology, for instance, students might learn a plant's Latin name as well as its Indian name and traditional medicinal use.

Tribal colleges are the country's most underfunded institutions of higher education. They receive few federal government dollars and no state dollars. In these isolated areas, Indian tribes have few resources to support a college. (Casinos do not flourish there.) Even though tuition is modest, most students can barely afford it. About 85 percent of students live at the poverty level.

That's where the College Fund comes in. Tribal colleges created the Fund to raise private support for scholarships, endowments and public awareness. With support from thousands of individuals like you, we distributed nearly $4 million in scholarships and other programs in 1998.

We've enclosed a brochure and fact sheet for you. Please contact us if you have further questions. You may also wish to consult our Internet website, *www.collegefund.org*.

Thank you very much for your interest and support.

In a Good Way,

Richard Williams
Executive Director