

# AIHEC Accreditation Working Group

September 8, 2010

Bismarck, ND

- Do we need consensus from everyone to move forward, or do we just do it: Goal of making a recommendation for establishing an accrediting body?
- How much time is involved – what is the time frame for developing an accrediting body?
- If focus is on language and culture, then why accredit it? Is Western accreditation really what we want to talk about?
- Should it be voluntary or involuntary (mandatory for AIHEC membership?)
- Should it be part of AIHEC or separate? (Are we mixing advocacy with accrediting?)

*See summary of  
Accreditation  
Questionnaire.*

## **Key Activities/Issues for This Working Group:**

- Benchmarks for the Working Group:
  - Eventually, this could be part of the criteria for membership in AIHEC?
- Timeline
- Focus of Working Group
- Who is serving as evaluators
- ...
- Foundation of our existence is our tribal knowledge, yet some TCUs (e.g. NWIC) do not even have a Native language requirement:

*Some treaty people (and others – including Dr. Manning) say that if you don't know your language, you don't really know yourself*

*TCU accreditation is a way to strengthen tribal identity: how do TCUs help strengthen identity as an individual and tribe?*



*Tribal identity is not an add-on, It is the living culture that you (we) are in. It is foundational for TCUs and permeates everything and all aspects of the college.*

- Community; Place; Personal Gifts; Tribal Sovereignty (i.e. Indigenous Evaluation Framework )

- *JUDGMENT MODEL v. Self-improvement model*

Step One: Establish a Mission Statement: First question, full (general) accrediting body or specialty?

- CCB supports general because a specialty entity feels like an add-on.
- LB: general permeates everything – our ancestors; foundation; spirituality is the over-viewer of everything that goes on; economics, governance, etc.
- Some presidents express concerns (governing board approval, transferability (big for 2-year schools))

Does Validation mean a judgment of quality? If you are talking about unique tribal groups, people might object to even tribal outsiders coming in.

**Elements:**

- Guiding principles
  - Core values
  - Framework that is place-based
  - Guidance for process, reviewers
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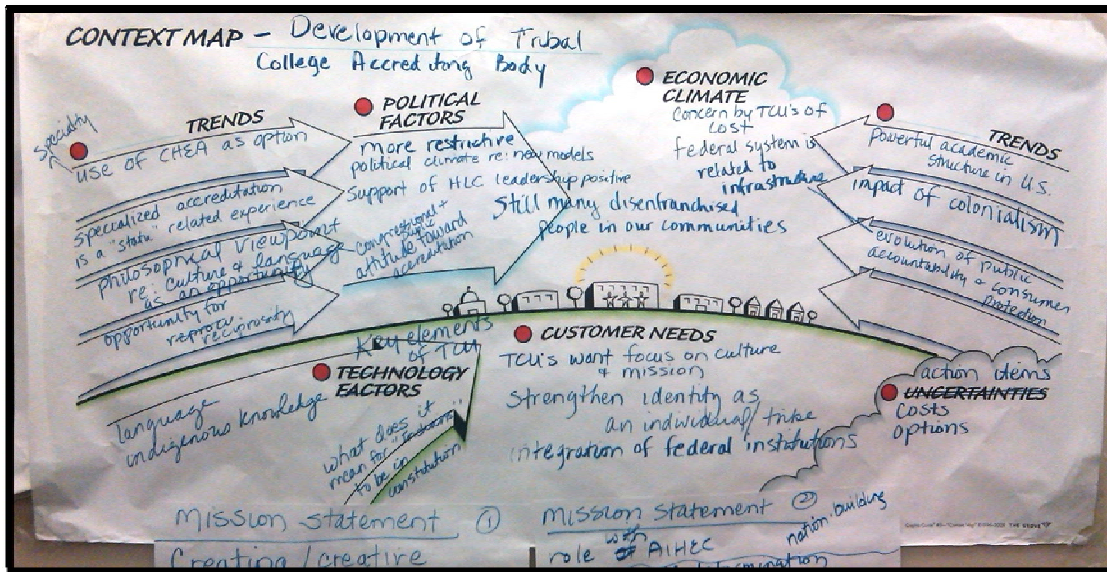
### Grove Worksheets:

Today we will do Steps 1-3:

- Articulating the Context
- SWOT (or SPOT)
- Vision Mapping

## Worksheet One: CONTEXT MAP:

### Development of Tribal College Accrediting Body



#### ■ **Trends:**

- Specialty: use of CHEA as option
- Specialized accreditation is a “status-“related experience
- Philosophical viewpoint re culture and language as an opportunity
- Opportunity for reciprocity
- Powerful academic structure in the US
- Impact of colonialism
- Evolution of public accountability and consumer protection

#### ■ **Political Factors:**

- More restrictive political climate re new models
- Support of HLC leadership is positive
- Congressional and public attitude toward accreditation

#### ■ **Economic Climate:**

- Concern by TCUs of cost
- Federal system is related to infrastructure
- Still many disenfranchised people in our communities

**Customer Needs:**

- TCUs want focus on culture and mission
- Strengthen identity as an individual/tribe
- Integration of federal institutions

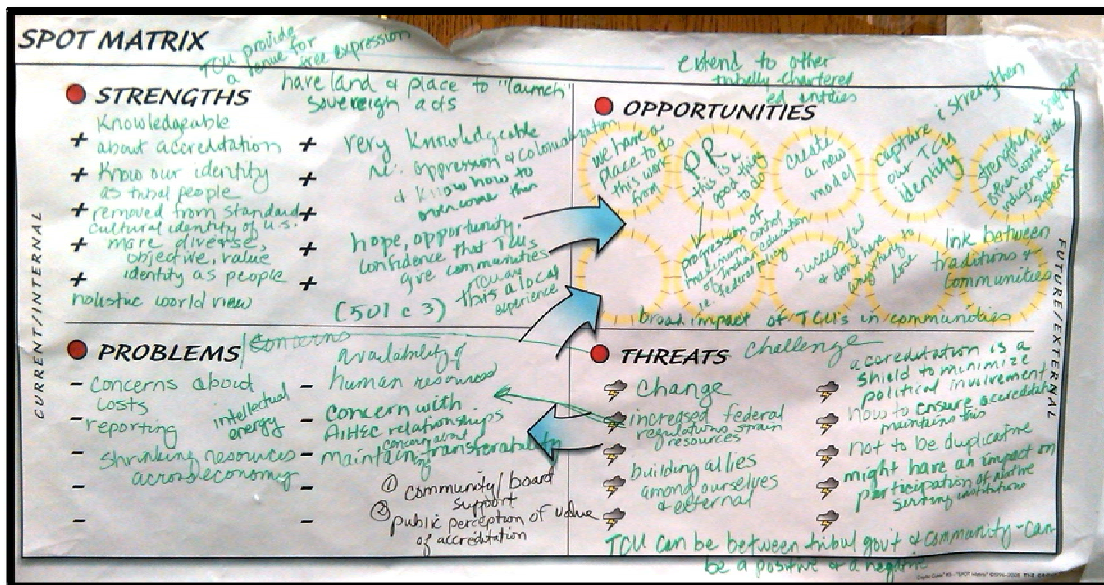
**Key Elements of TCU:**

- Language
- Indigenous Knowledge
- What does it mean for “Indians” to be in Constitution?

**Action Items:**

- Costs
- Options
- Guiding Principles
- Core Values
- Framework that is place-based
- Guidance for process, reviewers
- Create a transitional process from regional to a TCU process

**(2) Worksheet Two: SPOT MATRIX**



**Strengths:**

- Very knowledgeable about accreditation
- Know our identity as tribal people (knowledgebase)
- Removed from standard cultural identity of US – can see the worldview (more diverse, objective)
- Holistic world view; we see a value in people having individual identity

- Connection to land: place to do this from
- Very knowledgeable of about impact of oppression and colonial impact, therefore we know the strategies to help our people overcome this
- Link between traditions/governments and communities
- Hope, opportunity, confidence that TCUs give communities
- TCUs are a local experience
- TCUs provide a venue for free expression

**Problems:**

- Cost
- Reporting
- Increased federal regulations strain resources
- Concern with AIHEC relationships
- Concern about maintaining transferability

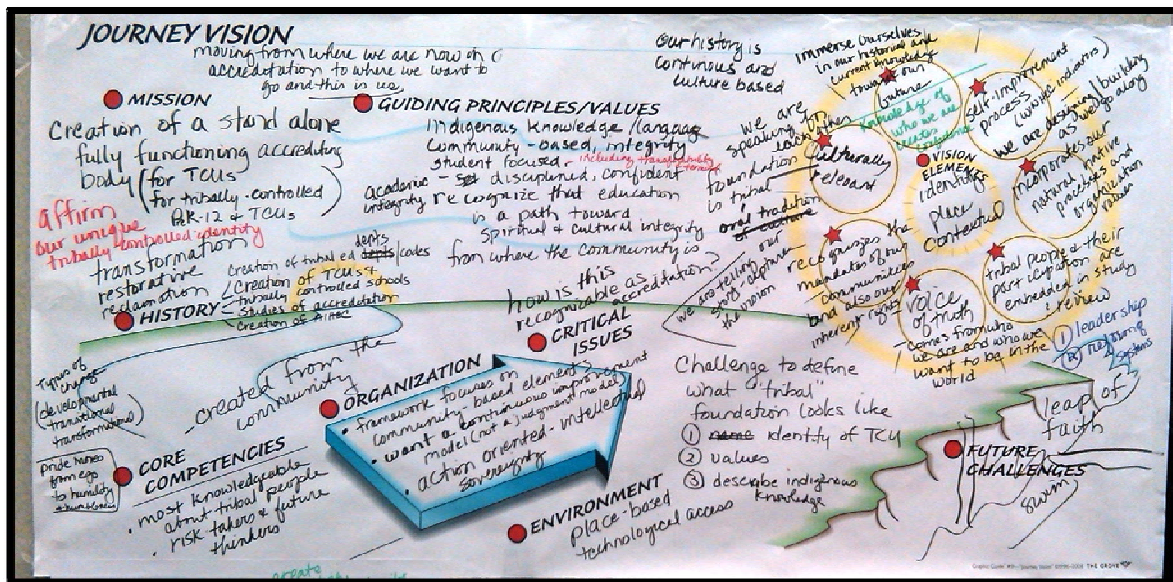
**Threats/Challenges:**

- Change
- Some TCUs have used accreditation as a shield to minimize political involvement
- Building allies among ourselves and external
- How to ensure accreditation maintains this: not be duplicative
- Might have an impact on participation of Native Serving Institutions
- TCUs can be between tribal government and community – can be positive and negative
- Accreditation is a shield to minimize political involvement
- Not to be duplicative
- TCU can be between tribal government
- 2-year institutions are very concerned about transferability issue and will demand “credibility”

**Opportunity:**

- We have a place to do this work from (“people of a place” – homeland)
- PR: this is a good thing to do, for example... (see next bullet)
- This is a step in the ongoing progression of maximum control of Indian education (i.e. federal policy)
- Create a new model
- Opportunity to capture and strengthen our TCU identity
- Strengthen other worldwide Indigenous efforts
- We are already successful and don’t have anything to lose
- Hope, opportunity, confidence that TCUs give to communities
- Extend to other tribally-charted educational entities
  - Transformation; Transformative, Transform
  - Restorative
  - Affirm

### (3) Worksheet Three: JOURNEY VISION



#### **Mission:**

- Creation of a standalone fully functioning accrediting body for TCUs (and tribally-controlled pre-K-12 schools).
- Moving from where we are not in accreditation to where we want to go and this is us
- Transformation; restorative

#### **History:**

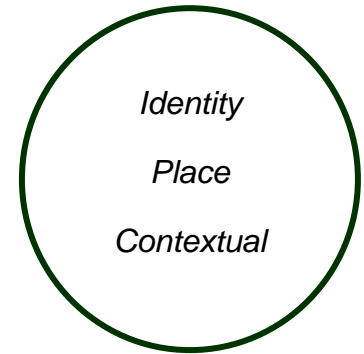
- Creation of tribal education departments/codes
- Creation of TCUs and tribally controlled schools
- Studies of Accreditation
- Creation of AIHEC
- Types of Change:
- Developmental; transitional, transformational
- Pride moves from ego to humility and humbleness

#### **Guiding Principles/Values:**

- Indigenous knowledge/language
- Community-based
- Integrity
- Student focused, including transferability and terminal degree programs
- Our history is continuous and culture-based
- From where the community is
- Academic integrity: disciplined, confident
- Recognition that education is a path toward spiritual and cultural integrity

**Vision Elements:**

- (1) Leadership
- (2) Reform of Systems
  - We are telling our story to capture our vision
  - Culturally Relevant: foundation is tribal; oral tradition
  - We are speaking from each other
  - Recognizes the mandates of our communities and also our inherent rights
  - Voice of truth: comes from who we are and who we want to be in the world
  - Tribal people and their participation are embedded in study and review
  - Incorporates our natural, native processes and organizations
  - Self-improvement process (WINHEC indicators)
  - We are designing/building as we go along
  - Immerse ourselves in our historical and current knowledge toward our future: knowledge of who we are creates confidence
  - Recognizes the mandates of our communities and also our inherent rights:



**Core Competencies:**

- Created from the community
- Most knowledgeable about tribal people
- Risk takers and future thinkers

**Organization:**

- Framework focuses on community-based elements
- Want a continuous improvement model (not a judgment model)
- Action oriented-intellectual sovereignty

**Critical Issues:**

- Challenge to define what “tribal” foundation looks like:
  - (1) Identity of TCU
  - (2) Values
  - (3) Describe Indigenous knowledge
- How is this recognizable as accreditation

**Environment:**

- Place-based technological access

## **Discussion – Purpose:**

JS: Our rituals (create setting, opportunity) are constructed over generations to lead our people from one point to another (to create a different human being), to open the mind, to consider other perspectives: *outcome of individual* [see: Indigenous Evaluation Framework Focus Group Discussions]

This discussion is good because it is taking us back to what we are really trying to do, as opposed to duplicating a western model.

## **KEY ACTIVITIES:**

1. Time line- evolutionary
2. Benchmarks
3. Focus of working group
4. Who is serving as evaluators
5. Answer the questions:
  - a. How does this apply to my college
  - b. What will my board think – will they support the idea?
6. Cost
7. Options

## **MISSION STATEMENT:**

Creating/Creative

Permeate with every aspect of Indian Society

Descriptive of what a community looks like

Spirituality as a the foundation

What are we trying to do: Validate, judge, supportive, focused

Holistic facilitators, we are a totality

Voluntary or required

Role with AIHEC

Nation-building

### **WHAT?**

- Spirituality, Treaties, Compassion, Laws, Customs, Values, Inherent Rights; Community; Sovereignty, Self-termination

### **WHO?**

- Tribal Colleges and Universities: *Chartered or Controlled*

### **HOW?**

- Treaties/Sovereignty
- Curriculum
- Governance



- History
- *Value, Integrity:*
  - Language
  - Curriculum
  - Pedagogy of Teaching/Learning
- Indigenous ways of knowing

Evolution from where tribal nations are now to where we envision tribal nations to be in the future: Why are we doing this?

- Better people; more tribally-based; grow to a higher standard (Currently, accrediting bodies don't understand the mandate that TCUs have from their tribal community.)

This will frame the reason for tribal accreditation.

### **Possible Mission Statements:**

*The mission of the TCUs who are tribally-chartered institutions of higher education and are governed by a separate tribal accrediting agency are founded on preserving and strengthening tribal self-determination, spirituality, treaties, laws, and customs through respective Native languages, curriculum, pedagogy of teaching and learning and Indigenous ways of knowing.*

*Accredit tribally-chartered institutions through support of tribal higher education missions and organizational practices toward evolution of our communities and people to a [more] spiritual, cultural, and environment-based in self-determination and Indigenous knowledge.*

\*\* Inherent rights, as recognized by treaties. (Use this type of phrase rather than “rights conferred through treaties – CCB)

### **Possible Vision:**

*All tribally controlled colleges will be accredited by an entity they collectively determine.*



**Maybe we are talking about something bigger/different from standard, status-quo or modified Western accreditation** (see above). Is there another word that better describes our intend goal/process? What word describes what we want to create, sanction, and implement (and is not loaded with the “accreditation baggage“?:

- Affirmation
- Sanction
- Certify

**Some things to remember/consider/address...**

- There may be unintended consequences of our actions
- Could be viewed as a threat
- This effort is not duplicative if it is the only one we are using
- Majority of TCU Questionnaire respondents said they needed more information or that they would agree to an accrediting body only in addition to existing accrediting structures: this issue must be addressed through education, outreach, information sharing, and allowing/encouraging all to be part of the creation process.

**TO DO on Thursday:**

- (1) Draft Mission Statement
- (2) Draft Guiding Principles
- (3) Time line and benchmarks
- (4) Education/Information-sharing Strategy (Marketing & Advocacy)

**Goal:** Report to Board in October 2010