



**STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM  
IN RESPONSE TO THE U.S. SUPREME COURT'S EFFORT TO STRENGTHEN  
AN UNEQUAL SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
June 29, 2023**

As we reflect on the U.S. Supreme Court's attempt to slam doors of higher education shut to many across the country, we rise to say some doors will never be closed.

As the first peoples of this land, American Indians and Alaska Natives have always had and continue to have our own ways of educating our people, based on our own ways of knowing and being. We were here before affirmative action, and we will be here -- strong, resilient, and sovereign -- after the Supreme Court's decision this week.

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), place-based institutions of higher education chartered by federally recognized Indian Tribes or the federal government, have a special relationship with the government of this country. Founded on treaties, the federal Trust responsibility, and the exchange of over one billion acres of land, our relationship – and the obligations that flow from that relationship – were not extinguished or even diminished today. Yet, we feel the repercussions throughout Indian Country of any decision issued by a Court that fails to recognize the enduring impact of centuries of oppression, slavery, and injustice.

Not every American Indian or Alaska Native person has the opportunity to attend a TCU, and today, many of our graduates continue on to other public and private institutions of higher education. We grieve that future education, economic, and research opportunities will be lost to students, colleges, communities, and the entire country, as colleges dismantle policies and programs that have been the only means for many students of color and women to access higher education.

Yet, fear and sorrow will not immobilize us. We hear the songs and prayers of our ancestors, and the drumbeat of their courage strengthens us. We pledge to be good and active partners to all: to other institutions of higher education, we are committed to working with you to better serve all Native students by sharing effective and inclusive policies, practices, and recommendations. To our Native youth – and to all who seek higher education – we welcome you. As place-based, community-focused institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities will remain safe, affordable, and accepting centers of knowledge creation for all.