

RREV School Snapshot – Maine Indian Education

Background

In June 2020, the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) was awarded a \$16.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Rethink K–12 Education Models program to implement the Rethinking Responsive Education Ventures (RREV) program. The overarching purpose of RREV is to support Maine educators to create, implement, and disseminate responsive and innovative educational models that help all students learn and thrive.

Pilot Description

In May 2022, Maine Indian Education (MIE) received an award from RREV to implement its pilot project (which has yet to be named in collaboration with MIE students and the community). This pilot is in the Multiple Pathways category.

The goals of this pilot are to:

- Engage students in learning pathways that will build connections between students and their culture, community, and school.
- Connect students to ancestral knowledge systems through critical thinking and deep reflection.
- Foster the development of a strong cultural foundation and identity through daily experiences with language, history, and practices based on Wabanaki worldviews.
- Teach stewardship of land, water, and natural resources, through cultural knowledge, mentorship, and project-based learning.

Key activities of this pilot include:

- Students engage in immersive project-based experiences with emphasis on cultural and real-world learning.
- A daily language and culture routine is established at each school and students are connected to daily language and cultural practices (20-30 minutes per day).
- MIE engages community partners to ensure students have access to place-based learning opportunities that match their interests and needs.

Exhibit: RREV Award Summary

Budget

Category	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Personal Services – Salaries and Stipend	\$119,000		
Employee Benefits	\$55,028		
Purchased Professional and Technical Services	\$36,000		
Employee Travel	\$5,000		
Instructional Supplies	\$13,972		
Instructional Field Trip Transportation	\$21,000		
Total	\$250,000	\$0	\$250,000

- Over 100 students directly involved.
- Grades 6-8 served
- Nine teachers directly involved

Responsiveness of the pilot

MIE's pilot is responsive to local needs and/or assets because:

- **It centers Wabanaki knowledge, culture, and identity.** COVID posed a significant barrier to school-based cultural celebrations, which historically have connected students to culture and community. Student surveys showed that students felt disconnected from their learning in school and yearned for immersive practical and cultural learning experiences, particularly those that centered Wabanaki culture and language. This pilot is responsive to these student needs by providing programming, which includes an increased focus on Wabanaki culture, language, and practices as well as creating a structure in which students can make learning choices that puts their Wabanaki knowledge, culture, and identity first.

Innovativeness of the pilot

MIE's pilot is innovative because:

- **It takes a decolonizing approach to education.** The historic legacies of assimilation and cultural bleaching under the guise of education for the "betterment" of Native peoples has resulted in a great deal of ethnostress among American Indian/Alaska Native students today. Ethnostress can be understood as the stresses that occur when Native students attempt to reposition a sense of self in a largely Western/Anglo-dominant environment while being fully aware of their historical and cultural connections and significance to Native identity. According to the RREV Pilot Project Instructional Leader, MIE students experience a degree of ethnostress in their day-to-day school lives, and this learning model is an opportunity to address this problem through balancing curricular standards and requirements with a recentering of Indigenous identity.