Equity Today: The Region VIII EAC Podcast
Episode 203 – “Increasing Opportunities for Native American Students Conference”

The Region VIII Equity Assistance Center at Metropolitan Statue University of Denver is guided by its vision to provide, upon request, technical assistance, training, and staff development for school boards, school districts, tribal education agencies, charter schools, and other responsible government agencies. We strive to promote equitable education opportunities and access for all students. We seek to improve equity, access, and participation and high quality, research-based opportunities for all students. We work to reduce disparities between and among groups where they may arise.

Tyler: Hello and welcome to another edition of Equity Today, the EAC Region VIII podcast. I’m Tyler, and today I’m sitting in with Marcela Parra, and today we’re going to talk about the Increasing Opportunities for Native American Students Conference, that is coming up here in May. So, what can you tell us about this conference?

Marcela: The conference came to Metro via Charles Beatty from the Presidents office. He actually represented the University and the EAC at another conference that was held in November of 2011, and Colorado Department of Education requested that Metro State take over the organization, the committee chair to do the following conference, which would be the second phase. The first conference was Best Practices for Native American students, so it involved a lot of the educators, district superintendents, state department leaders, and community leaders, and they wanted to take that and bring in the targeted audience, which is the parents, the in-service educators that are teaching Native American students in the Denver urban area, and the students. So we took it over and we are now ready to host the event which will be May 3 and 4 here at Metro State University, and it’s going to be focused on Parental Engagement, Advocacy, Federal Regulations and legislation such as Title VII, federal identification needs. Also, helping administrators and educators connect with the parents and the community; that will happen on Friday. On Saturday, we’re going to be hosting Walt Pourier who is Lakota Tribal Member, who is an artist-in-residence, will be an artist-in-residence until the end of March, and he is doing great stuff with the students because he is, one, connecting with them in areas that they like, tying traditional culture arts, stories, figures, with contemporary art, and he’s doing it by skateboards, so he’s going around the nation building skateboard parks on reservations.

T: Yeah, this guy’s stuff is very, very cool. So, he designs the skateboard decks, and then he’ll sell them, and then uses the profits to fund skate parks into the reservations? That’s awesome.
M: Exactly.

T: And I'll have his website linked in the show notes if you want to check those out.

M: Oh great. And he’s doing it very healthy. He’s having students, he’ll do workshops, which he’s not going to do at this conference, but he’ll do workshops with students and have them design their own skateboard deck. He’s the director of the Stronghold Society. It’s a non-profit dedicated to instilling hope and supporting youth movements through Live Life Call To Action campaigns. So he is really in touch with our Native American Youth needs.

T: That’s awesome. You said that Title VII is going to be a focus at the conference. What is that?

M: On Friday May 3, we’re going to have, we’ve invited Joy Silverthorne, and she’s the Director of the Office of Indian Education, US Department of Ed. She is responsible for supporting local, and state and national educational agencies as well as the Indian tribes and organizations to meet all of the academic needs of Native Americans and Alaska Natives. She has strong tie to the community here in Colorado and Montana. Title VII, to answer your question is the Federal legislation dealing with Indian education. SO it’s tied to funding, it’s tied to identification, it’s tied to everything.

T: And does it pretty much suggest that it should be equal for all Native American entities as it is to any other?

M: Yes, unfortunately the funding is not as generous as it should be.

T: Mmhmm. What it says and what it funds are a little different.

M: Yes. So, while Denver urban area has many Title VII sites, they don’t have enough liaisons. Liaisons would be the communication person between the parents, the Tribe, the students, and the school. And so, one school could be sharing, or, one liaison could be servicing 4-7 schools at a time, depending on what district.

T: Oh my gosh. Stretching them too thin.

M: Yes. And at times, rendering them maybe not as effective as they could be because of that, so that’s another area that we’re going to talk about. How parents should know more about Title VII, how it helps. If you are identified correctly, how it helps bring in funding to help provide a better education for your Native American students.

T: Yeah. And, I think individual empowerment is an important thing. Because if you’re getting parents aware of this, and also young children,
M: Students –

T: Students who are going to be becoming adults soon. Yeah, it sounds like a really, really good idea, and a nice goal behind it.

M: Well, it’s good you brought that up, because the ideas actually came from Title VII directors, Title VII liaisons, Title VII community leaders, Title VII educators, so, we like to, through the EAC, not go in and tell people what they should do. We like to hear what they need and help them make, address those needs or provide services to bring projects such as this to fruition, so that’s the key, listening to the public, listening to the parents, listening to the students, listening to the educators who are part of the community and providing services to meet their needs. To provide support, resources, the tools, give them the skills to advocate for themselves, give the students to advocate for themselves, increase their educational resilience, all sorts of things.

T: Yeah, individual empowerment is so important these days. And we should also mention that this is, there’s no fees to attend this conference.

M: No, the conference is entirely free, we’re providing a lot of the funding. We’re getting some support from the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, Mr. Ernest House, Jr. Colorado Department of Education will be represented as well. And Metro State University, of course.

T: Awesome. And so if people want to register, there’s a form online?

M: Yes, it’s on our website, which is...

T: In the show notes.

M: It’s www.metrostate-eac.org. And there will be a link on that website to that conference and you can either register online or download a PDF.

T: Yeah, there’s a printable form that you can either fax or scan an email to us. And the easiest way is just to fill out the registration form online, and I’ll link directly to it, but again, if you don’t have access right now, then go to metrostate-eac.org, and alongside there will be an Indian Affairs Conference link.

M: And if you have any questions, please feel free to call me, Marcela. My number is on the website.

T: Awesome. Anything else?

M: Um, no? Actually one more thing. We’re going to be hosting another conference in the Durango/Four Corners area on August 17. But that will be a whole other project.
T: Well awesome! Thank you so much for sitting down with us!

T: If you would like to contact the Region VIII Equity Assistance Center, you may do so at our website, metrostate-eac.org, phone 303-556-6065, or via email, at eac@msudenver.edu. Listeners are also invited to join the conversation by following us on twitter @EACRegion8, or by liking the Equity Assistance Center Region VIII facebook page. Special thanks to the band Northbound for the use of their song Forward in this podcast. Thank you.