

The National Fund (BIE Foundation) Finalizes Senior Leadership Team with Three New Hires

Nicholas Courtney, Nick Cunningham and Ashley Eden join the BIE's Congressionally chartered foundation as it expands grantmaking to 183 Native schools.

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[Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education](#), the Congressionally chartered foundation for the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), today announced three additions that complete its senior leadership team: Nicholas Courtney (Makah) as Program Director, Nick Cunningham as Chief Financial Officer, and Ashley Eden as Chief of Staff.



The National Fund is the Congressionally Chartered Foundation for the Bureau of Indian Education

The hires come during a period of significant growth for the organization. The National Fund is advancing a bold, Indigenous-centered vision for Native education. It serves as a philanthropic partner to the BIE and its national network of 183 K-12 schools, which serve more than 40,000 Native American students across 23 states. Since making its first grant awards in 2025, the organization has expanded both the scale of its investments and the range of school priorities it supports, from Native language immersion to literacy leadership and principal coaching.

Nicholas Courtney, Program Director

Courtney, a citizen of the Makah Tribe, leads the organization's grantmaking and school partnership work. He brings more than a decade of experience across Tribal policy, education, federal programs, and community development, including at the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration, where he helped lead implementation of the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, and as Director of Policy for the National Congress of American Indians. He has taught courses on Tribal governance and Native politics at Cornell University and George Washington University.

Nick Cunningham, Chief Financial Officer

Cunningham oversees financial operations, grant compliance and reporting, human resources, and administrative systems. He brings more than a decade of nonprofit finance and operational

leadership experience, most recently as Chief Financial Officer at the National Policing Institute. He has served in senior financial leadership and advisory roles for organizations funded by HHS, DOJ, USAID, AmeriCorps, and private funders including Arnold Ventures and the Gates Foundation. He is a licensed CPA in South Carolina and North Carolina and holds the CITP, ChFC, PMP, and ACNP designations.

Ashley Eden, Chief of Staff

Eden leads policy and government relations, communications, and development and fundraising. She brings nearly two decades of experience across education policy, government relations, and strategic operations, including as Vice President of Policy and Advocacy at Orijin and in senior leadership roles at New Meridian Corporation and the New Mexico Public Education Department, where she helped lead development of the state's Every Student Succeeds Act plan. Earlier in her career, she worked in the United States Senate, including on the Senate HELP Committee.

"Building this team was the priority for this stage of our growth," said Heath Clayton (Chickasaw), lead executive officer of the National Fund. "Nick, Ashley, and Nicholas bring the financial discipline, policy expertise, Tribal systems experience, and relationships we need to be a serious long-term partner to BIE schools. We are in a much stronger position today than we were a year ago, and we have laid the foundation for years of impact."

Kara Bobroff (Diné/Lakota), chair of the National Fund's Board of Directors, added: "The National Fund looks for leaders who understand both the systems we work within and the communities we serve. These three wonderful leaders provide the organization the capacity to grow responsibly and to keep the students at the center of every decision."

For more information, visit <https://www.nfeaie.org/>.

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