



Issue 94

BrainWise, Knight Moves and Rotary Prepare Native American Youth for Success in Tech Jobs and Service

Linc Kroeger, the founder of Knight Moves, developed a 36-month hybrid technical training program that helps high school Native American youth transition from the classroom to well-paying remote jobs in their communities ([Knight Moves video](#)). Because he agrees with Google and Microsoft leaders that teaching technical skills social-emotional skills are equally important, and he was looking to add them to his program ([See Google, Microsoft, top companies want schools to teach SEL](#)).

Linc met Debra Flick, technical consultant, Rotarian, and BrainWise Board Member, at a work webinar. She invited him to present his program virtually to Denver Mile High Rotary (DMHR), where Dr. Pat is also a member. When Linc found out that BrainWise not only taught critical thinking skills but also had been recognized by Indian Health Services as benefiting Native Americans and Alaska Natives ([BrainWise and Indigenous Populations article](#)), he met with Dr. Pat and formed a partnership with BrainWise.



Knight Moves' Students

Integrating BrainWise into Knight Moves would help students obtain coding and IT training while learning to use their executive functions to collaborate, work with teams, make responsible decisions, and become involved with community members. This approach addresses barriers tribal leaders identified as holding back Native American participation in the IT workforce: recruitment, representation, and retention ([FedTech TribalNet 2024](#)).

Linc and Dr. Pat started seeking funding, including applying for a Wells Fargo community grant that required the project be on a reservation in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah or Wyoming. Linc approached his contacts and Dr. Pat contacted Rotarians who had connections with tribal leaders. This background sets the stage for how Rotary International and the Rotary Club of Limavady (Ireland) became funding and project partners to prepare Native American youth for success in technology and service.

Rotary as a Funding Partner. The Navajo Nation is the largest of the 574 federally recognized Native American tribes in the United States. Linc had contacted Navajo education leaders at Arizona's Window Rock High School about participating in a project funded by a grant from Wells Fargo. Unfortunately, the project stalled when the grant was pulled because of corporate restructuring.

A surprising grant revival happened when Dr. Pat realized because reservations are sovereign nations that they were eligible for Rotary International Global Grant (GG) funds. These grants are designated for countries outside the U.S. and require that the U.S. sponsoring club, DMHR, co-sponsor the grant with an international club. The Rotary club of Limavady, Ireland was recruited as the grant's DMHR's co-sponsor.

The Irish Connection. This *AHA* moment was based on little-known history from 1847 that Dr. Pat's mother had learned as a child at school in Ireland. Several years following the Trail of Tears and suffering their own displacement, poverty and starvation, the Choctaw Nation donated \$170 (\$6500 today) to Ireland to help its people during the Potato Famine. The Irish never forgot this act of kindness and taught the story in schools. The relationship between the Choctaw Nation and Ireland continues, including the installment of the Kindred Spirits sculpture in Ireland ([Kindred Spirits sculpture in Ireland. - YouTube](#)) and the "Eternal Heart" sculpture in Oklahoma (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVFQRiXph84_)



Kindred Spirits (Ireland)



Eternal Heart (Oklahoma)

Navajo Nation and Ireland. During Covid, when the Irish learned that the Navajo and Hopi tribes were hit hard by deaths, especially among their elders and aid was nonexistent or slow, Ireland initiated GoFundMe campaigns and raised millions of dollars for Navajo/Hopi COVID relief. Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Bratton expressed his gratitude: "We hope the Navajo and Hopi peoples develop lasting friendships, as we have."

This has happened. Navajo Nation Attorney General Doreen McPaul, a Navajo

member who also has dual citizenship with Ireland, posted a YouTube video thanking Ireland.



Ahéhee to Ireland for supporting the Navajo Nation!

Rotarians As Project Partners. The project will start at Window Rock High School in August 2025. As the technology and BrainWise classes progress, faculty will introduce reinforcement activities to help students gain mastery of the 10 Wise Ways. These include having Navajo students meet virtually with Young Rotary counterparts in Colorado and Ireland to choose community projects where they apply their problem-solving skills to issues they choose (personal, health, relationships, school, finance, job, environment). Rotarians will work with faculty to arrange the virtual meetings and help prepare students to make virtual and in-person project presentations at national and international Rotary meetings.

BrainWise Teens Community Projects. Stacey Hervey, a professor of criminal justice and sponsor of the Interact/Young Rotary Club at Denver's CEC High School has a fifteen-year history of recruiting students for BrainWise projects that benefit the community. Under her supervision, CEC's Young Rotary 2025-28 classes will be involved in projects with the Window Rock students and also work with Irish Young Rotary students. The following examples show some of the past BrainWise projects involving CEC students.

Teens Teach Fifth Graders Nutrition and More

Teen Mentors use Cartoons to Teach the 10 Wise Ways

Teen Mentors Reinforce Wise Way #1

Urban Teens Reinforce BrainWise with Rural 4th Graders

This article shows you how service clubs can be double lines in your Constellation of Support and valuable partners for developing, funding and implementing BrainWise projects.

I want to thank the many Rotarians and other BrainWise advocates who helped get this project funded. Carolyn Schrader of Denver Mile High Rotary took charge of the Rotary International Global Grant, including recruiting our Rotary partners in Limavady, Ireland, Howard Caskie and Seamus Parle. BrainWise

Board members and friends Debra Flick, Don Eberle, Matt Sena, and Rob McMahon helped me address multiple issues.

To them, other advocates, and all BrainWise teachers and supporters, my heartfelt thanks. You recognize the importance of helping people learn skills that will help them manage their emotions and understand the consequences of their choices now, later, and the effect they have on others.



Take care,
Dr. Pat

On a Lighter Note

Bryanna Rodriguez, a CEC BrainWise student who presented a keynote program with her classmates to four hundred Rotary leaders at the 2023 Rotary International Zone Institute in San Diego ([BrainWise, Rotary & Taylor Swift](#)) contacted me to tell me she is attending the University of Denver. She asked if she could volunteer for BrainWise and I told her about the project with Native American youth. Here is her reply:



Bryanna Rodriguez

Dear Dr. Pat,
My experience with BrainWise has been nothing short of amazing and I carry the skills I've learned even now as I navigate college life.

I've seen the wonders it has done in my own life, so I can truly speak to how impactful it truly is.

I believe BrainWise could really make a difference in lives and would love to contribute to the Native American youth project any way I can."

Take care,
Bryanna

Bryanna and the BrainWise Team (with the Rotary MC) Take a Selfie After Their Keynote Presentation at the Rotary International Zone Institute in San Diego



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