



NORTH DAKOTA TRIBAL DIGITAL LITERACY

Project Evaluation - March 2025

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ND TRIBAL DIGITAL LITERACY PROJECT

Introduction

Tribal colleges were established in North Dakota in the late 1960s and early 70s and have now grown to serve approximately 2,600 students per academic year across five fully accredited institutions. The North Dakota Tribal College System (NDTCS), incorporated in 1994, is comprised of:

- Cankdeska Cikana Community College (CCCC); Fort Totten, North Dakota
- Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College (NHSC); New Town, North Dakota
- Sitting Bull College (SBC); Fort Yates, North Dakota
- Turtle Mountain College (TMC); Belcourt, North Dakota
- United Tribes Technical College (UTTC); Bismarck, North Dakota

Each college within the NDTCS offers an educational experience uniquely attuned to the culture, traditions, and heritage of the people it serves while being affordable and easily accessible. They offer a vast array of educational options, including master's, bachelor's, and associate degrees, certificates, and non-credit training programs specifically designed to lead to in-demand jobs across the state's workforce.

Beyond providing degrees and certificates, the colleges are often an integral part of the communities they serve in many ways. They regularly offer a wide array of continuing education and personal leisure courses designed to serve the needs and interests of their respective communities. In addition, they house community gardens, art galleries, and performance spaces that facilitate arts and culture and improve the quality of life of their community members. Each tribal college also directly supports local businesses and entrepreneurship, further raising economic prosperity in North Dakota (NDTCS Economic Impact Study, 2025).



Problem Statement

According to 2020 US Census data, Benson (CCCC), Rolette (TMCC), and Sioux (SBC) counties in North Dakota have nearly double the US Poverty Rate (14%) and reservation unemployment rates hover at around 55 percent. Historically, tribal reservation communities are plagued by endemic poverty, job scarcity, and lack of investment capital and economic opportunity. Lack of access to reliable transportation and affordable housing/heating to cope with harsh ND winters often force residents to live day by day. It is difficult to consider embarking on the long-range goal of a college education when the essential foundations for living are so fragile. Rural communities have always had their challenges, but rural communities on tribal lands are ravaged more severely.

In terms of seeking and obtaining employment, the digital age has significantly reshaped the job market, demanding digital literacy skills in an astonishing 92 percent of jobs (Center for Workforce Inclusion). This creates a substantial challenge as even traditionally non-technical jobs now require basic to

advanced digital knowledge. The digital skills gap translates into a significant wage gap. Workers with even one digital skill earn 23 percent more on average, while those with three or more skills see a 45 percent increase in their wages, according to the National Skills Coalition. This highlights the economic importance of digital literacy in today's workforce. The future workforce, particularly in high-growth fields like healthcare, technology, and education, will heavily rely on these digital skills (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). This highlights the urgent need to address the digital skills gap and equip individuals for the evolving demands of the modern workplace. Given the above-mentioned circumstances, tribal members face unique challenges in accessing and utilizing technology effectively. Some may have limited access to technology and the internet at home, while others may lack adequate training or confidence in using digital tools. These challenges can hinder their academic success, career opportunities, and participation in the broader digital world.

Project Objectives

To address these challenges, the North Dakota Tribal Digital Literacy project was proposed in partnership with Microsoft and the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. The project's overall objective is:

To empower tribal members by giving them the necessary digital literacy skills to bridge the digital divide, thereby enabling their success in navigating and thriving in today's rapidly evolving technological landscape.

This past Fall 2024, the five North Dakota tribal colleges hosted 16-hour digital literacy trainings for up to twenty-five participants per location. Participants were given pre-and-post training surveys along with an overall training evaluation survey to measure the program's effectiveness and determine areas for improvement.

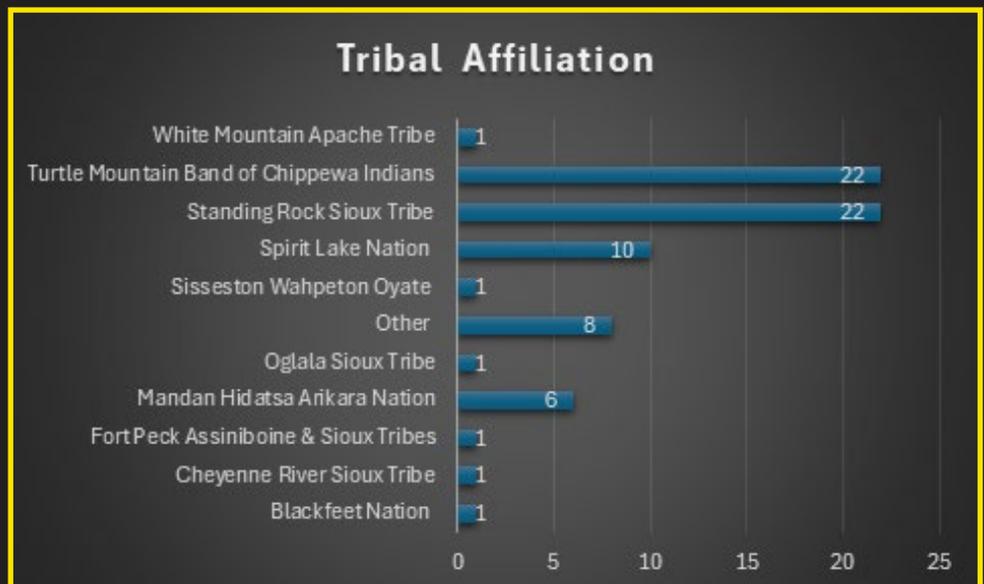
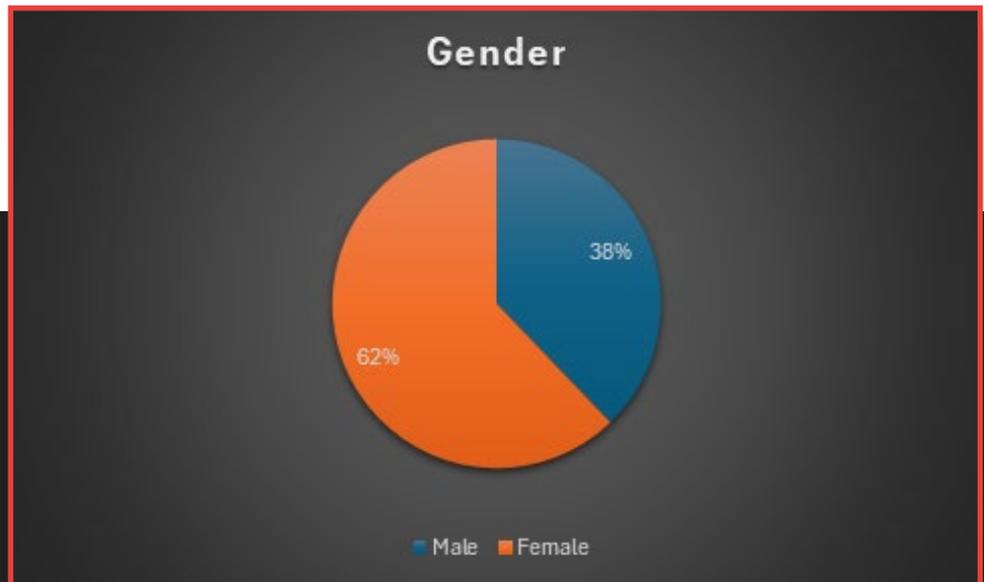
PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

The total number of training participants was 88, the breakdown per tribal college is as follows:

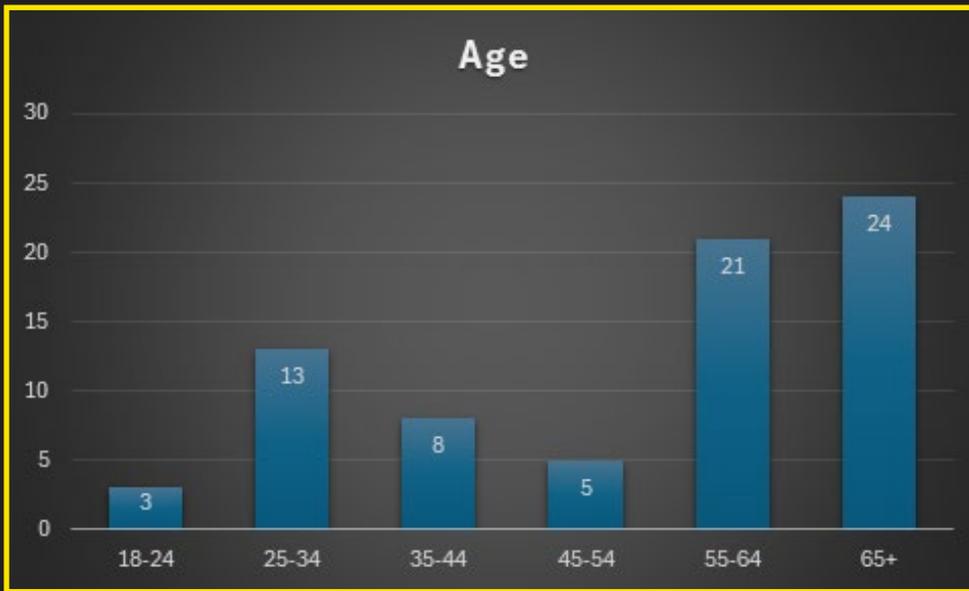
- Cankdeska Cikana Community College: **12** participants
- Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College: **13** participants
- Sitting Bull College: **13** participants
- Turtle Mountain College: **25** participants
- United Tribes Technical College: **25** participants

74 of the **88** participants completed the training evaluation, which resulted in an **84 percent** response rate. The training evaluation requested demographic information from program respondents in the following categories:

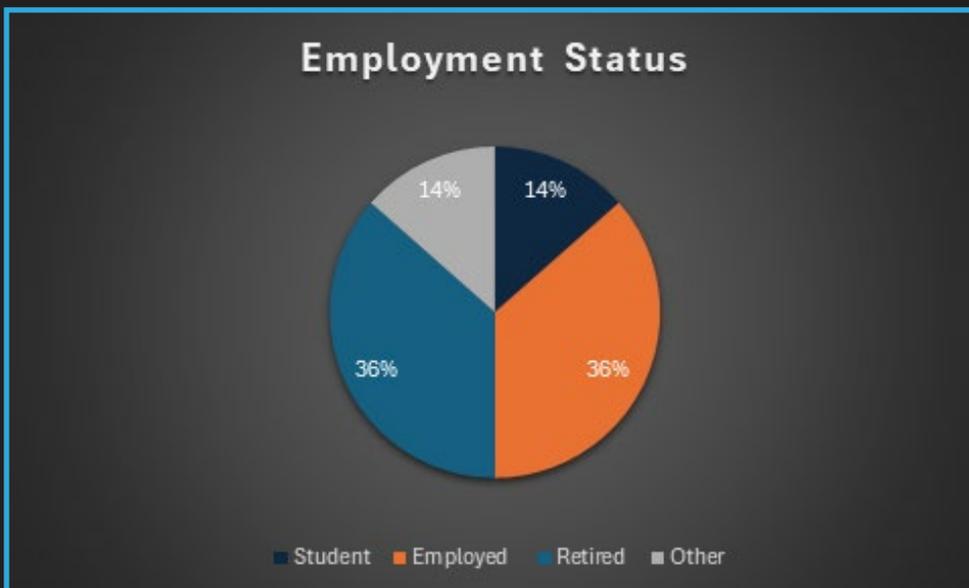
Of the **74** respondents, **28** were male and **46** were female.



Participant Demographics – continued



Training materials were marketed towards an audience with beginning or intermediate digital literacy skills; thus, most respondents fell into the last two age categories: 55-64 (21 respondents) and 65+ (24 respondents), which was **60 percent** of all survey respondents



Most respondents were either employed (27 respondents) or retired (27 respondents) making up the majority (**73%**) of all respondents. Those that answered Other wrote in varying answers that included responses such as "in between," "searching," or "unemployed," while others left it blank and did not indicate what Other was designated for.

PRE AND POST TRAINING SURVEYS

Participants in the Cankdeska Cikana Community College, United Tribes Technical College, Sitting Bull College, and Turtle Mountain College digital literacy training courses completed pre and post training surveys.

Pre Training Survey Results

Overall, 72 of the 88 participants completed the pre training survey resulting in an **82 percent response rate**.

The pre training survey consisted of 15 questions designed to gauge the experience level of each participant (see Appendix A). The average score for all respondents was **68.5 percent or 10 correct of 15 total questions**.

Individual location results and training details are as follows:

Turtle Mountain College (TMC)

TMC was the first tribal college within the North Dakota Tribal College System to host adult digital literacy training, which took place on October 11 + 12th, 2024, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. The initial response to the announcement of the training was overwhelming and after the advertisement flyer was posted to their college's social media accounts, the class filled within 24 hours and had a lengthy waiting list. Three TMC instructors were hired to run the training for the weekend.

- 22 of 25 participants completed the pre-training survey
- 10.5 of 15 questions (67%) was the average score

Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College (NHSC)

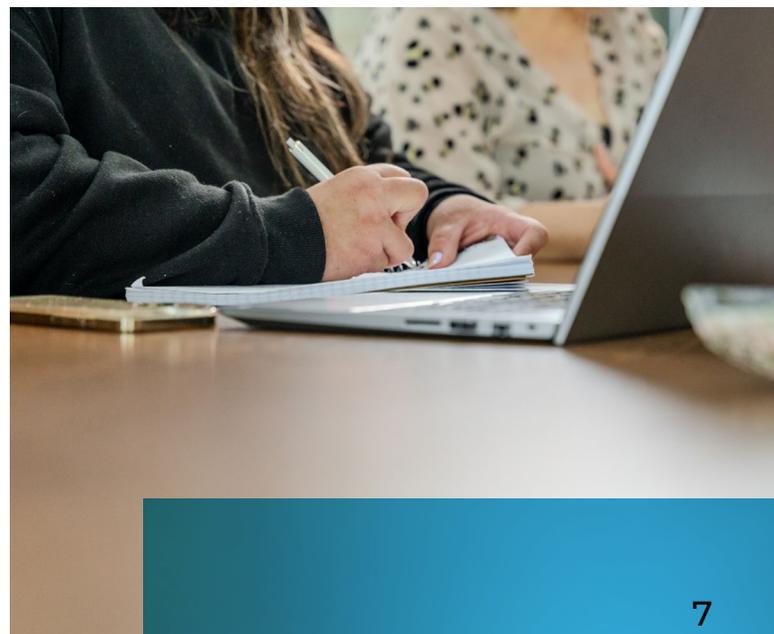
NHSC hosted their training on October 25 + 26th, 2024, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. NHSC did not fill their training due to the size capacity of their training lab which was 15 people. NHSC had three instructors leading the training.

Unfortunately, due to a miscommunication between our training team and NHSC's instructors none of their 13 participants were given the pre-test evaluation.

United Tribes Technical College (UTTC)

UTTC hosted their training on October 19 + 20th, 2024 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day. This training also ended up completely full at 25 participants with a waiting list. Two UTTC instructors led the training along with 4 UTTC student helpers.

- 25 of 25 participants completed the pre-training survey
- 11.76 of 15 questions (78%) was the average score



Sitting Bull College (SBC)

SBC chose to format their training a little differently than the other colleges, rather than having a two-day course hosted in one week or weekend, the instructor decided to break down the training into shorter sessions. As a result, digital literacy training was held each Saturday from noon to 4 p.m. throughout the month of November 2024. Sitting Bull College ended up with 13 completers who attended all four training sessions. Training was led by 1 instructor and 2 student helpers.

- 13 of 13 participants completed the pre-training survey
- 8.77 of 15 questions (58%) was the average score

Cankdeska Cikana Community College (CCCC)

CCCC hosted their training on November 13, 14 + 15th, 2024, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day. This training had 12 participants, led by 2 instructors and 2 other staff members assisting.

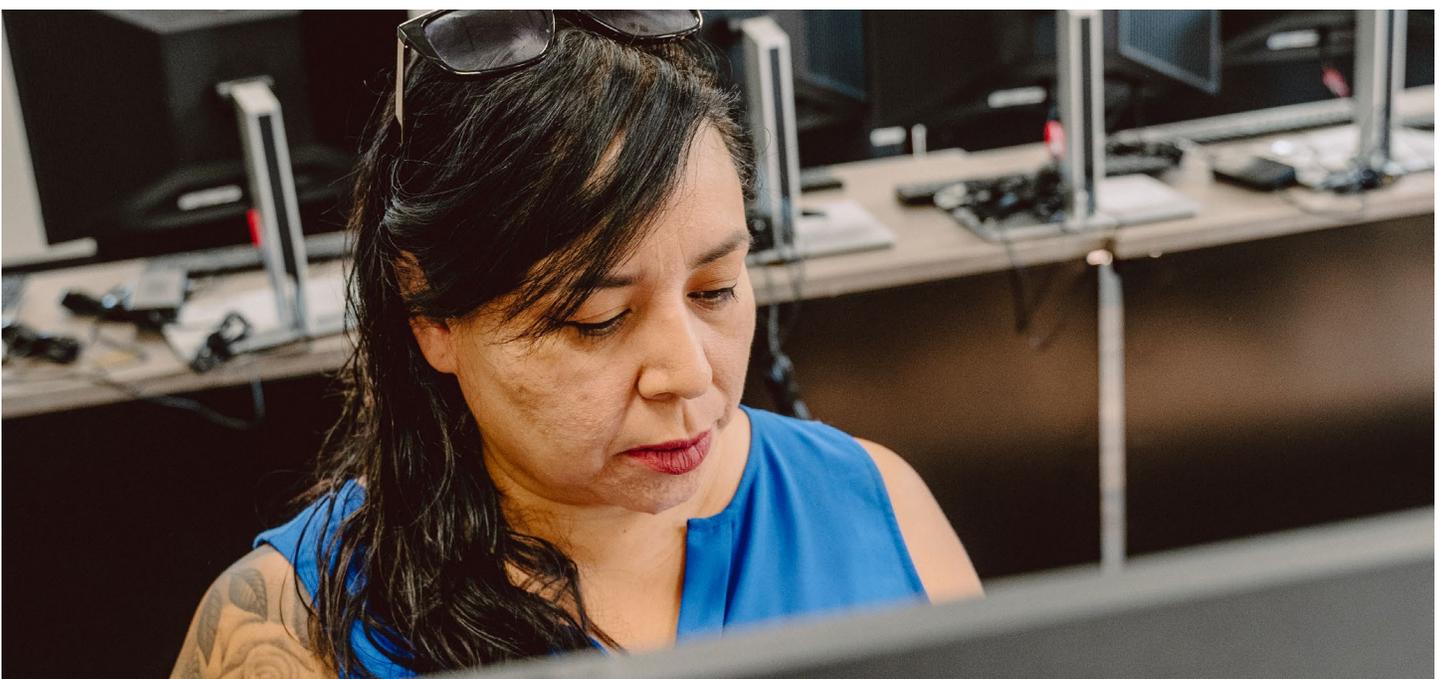
- 12 of 12 participants completed the pre-training survey
- 10.70 of 15 questions (71%) was the average score

Post Training Survey Results

Of the 88 training participants, 68 completed the post-training evaluation survey, resulting in a **77 percent response rate**.

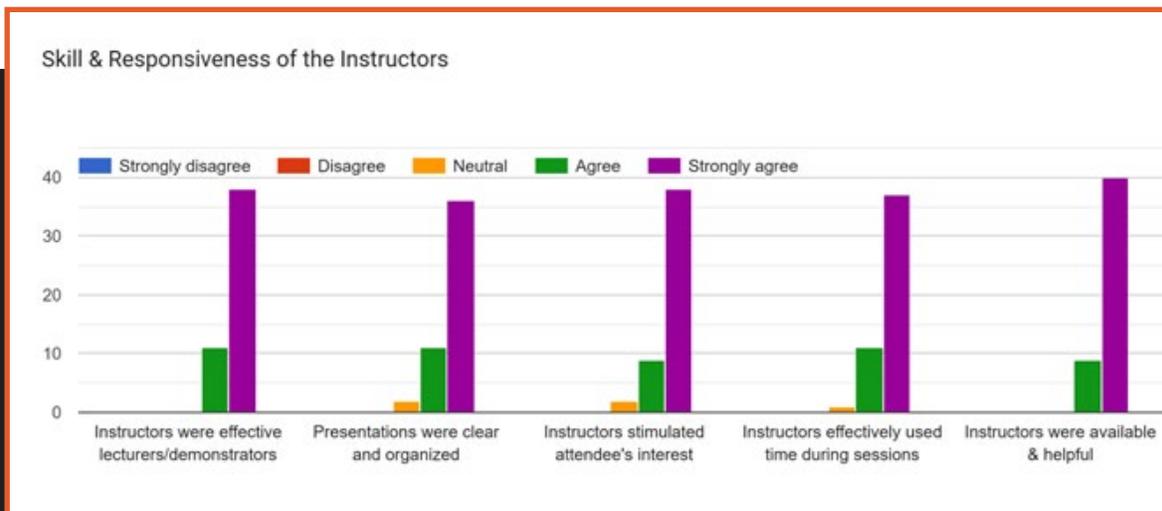
The post training survey was the same 15 questions given during the pre-training survey. The average score for all respondents was **76 percent or 11.4 correct of 15 total questions. From pre to post test, there was an overall 7.5 percent increase in scoring.**

Again, due to miscommunication between our training team and NHSC's instructors none of their 13 participants were given the post-training evaluation.

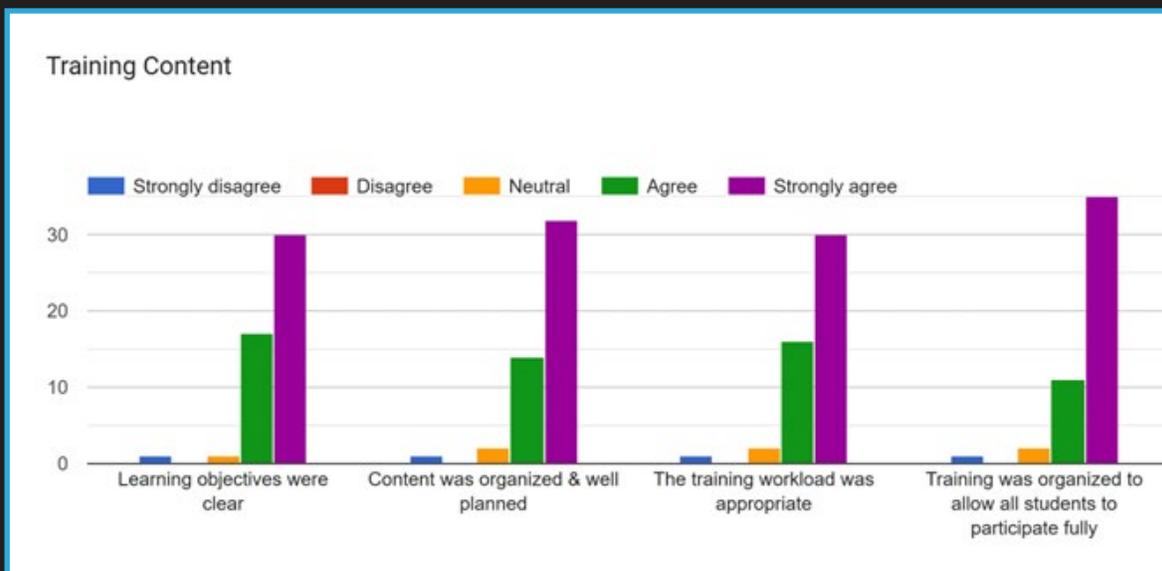


TRAINING + INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS

Participants were given a Training Evaluation to complete at the end of the course. Forty-nine participants (**49**) completed the evaluation, resulting in a **56 percent response rate**. Again, the **13** participants at Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College were not given any evaluation materials due to a miscommunication with instructors and the training team.



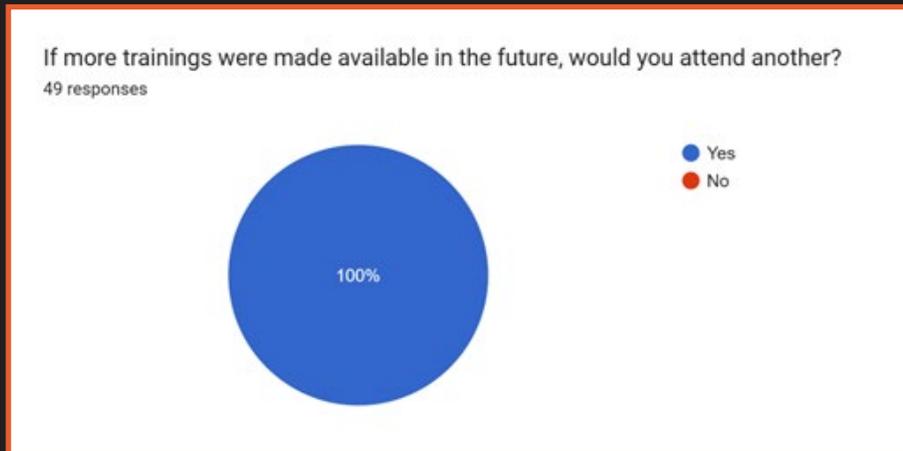
Participants overwhelmingly felt that the training instructors were knowledgeable, effective, organized and helpful as evidenced by the evaluation results. Most responses fell into the **Agree** and **Strongly Agree** categories.



Participants also scored the training content of the course favorably, with most responses again falling into the **Agree** and **Strongly Agree** categories.

In terms of improving participant confidence in their digital literacy skills, approximately **84 percent of respondents** rated themselves at the **beginner or intermediate level** in terms of computer knowledge prior to attending training. Post-training, **49 percent** of respondents reported feeling **confident with basic skills** and **20.4 percent** reported feeling **very confident** and felt that they could assist others with their computer skills.

Finally, when asked whether they would recommend this training to others, **100 percent of respondents** answered **'Yes.'** Additionally, if more digital literacy training sessions were available in the future, **100 percent of respondents** would attend another training course.

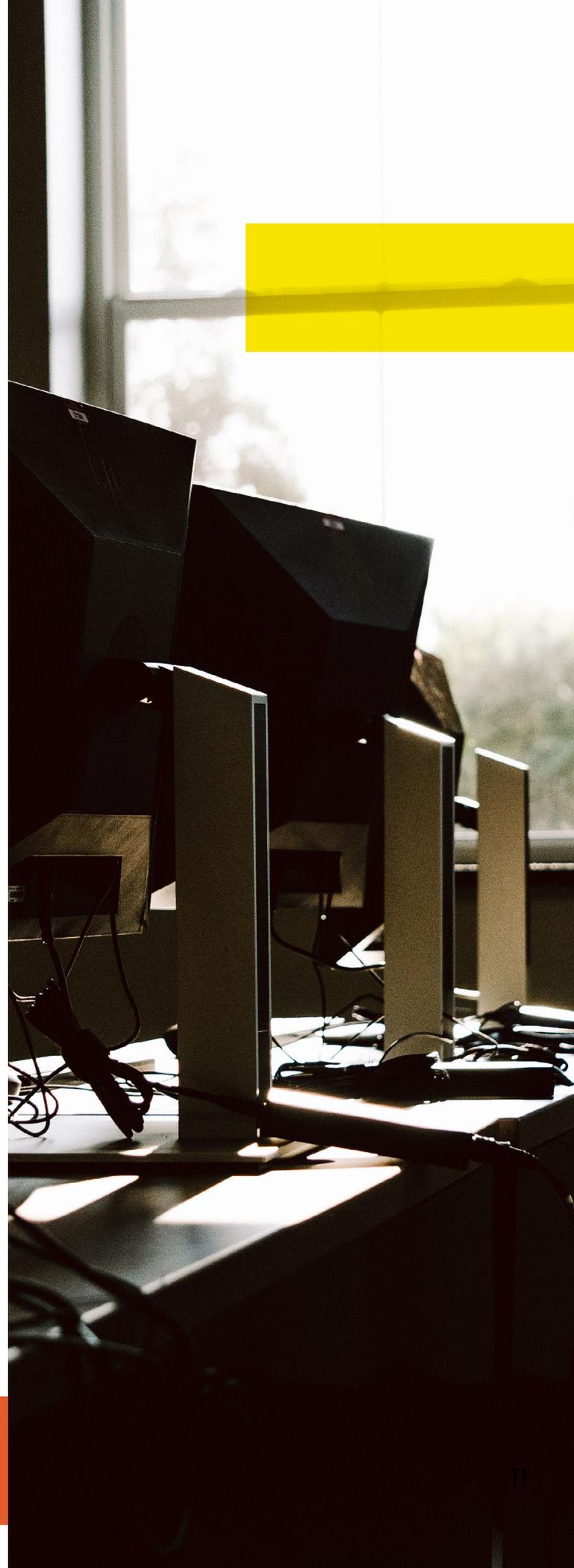


FINAL THOUGHTS

Overall, the North Dakota Tribal Digital Literacy program successfully met its objective of empowering Tribal community members with foundational and intermediate computer skills. Pre- and post-training survey results demonstrated measurable improvement in participant knowledge, with an overall increase of 7.5 percent from pre-test to post-test scores. Participants reported higher levels of confidence in using digital tools, transitioning from primarily beginner-level self-assessments to nearly 70 percent identifying as confident or very confident after training.

Participant satisfaction was exceptionally strong. Every respondent indicated they would recommend the training to others and would attend additional sessions if offered. Instructor effectiveness, course organization, and the relevance of training content all received overwhelmingly positive ratings. These responses highlight the program's cultural resonance and practical impact across all five tribal colleges.

The success of this initiative demonstrates both the need and enthusiasm for expanded digital literacy training. Continued investment in technology capacity-building—especially for elders, job seekers, and community members with limited digital access will further strengthen workforce and education pathways across North Dakota's Tribal Nations. The results of this evaluation strongly support ongoing and expanded efforts to build digital readiness, economic opportunity, and community empowerment through the North Dakota Tribal College System.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

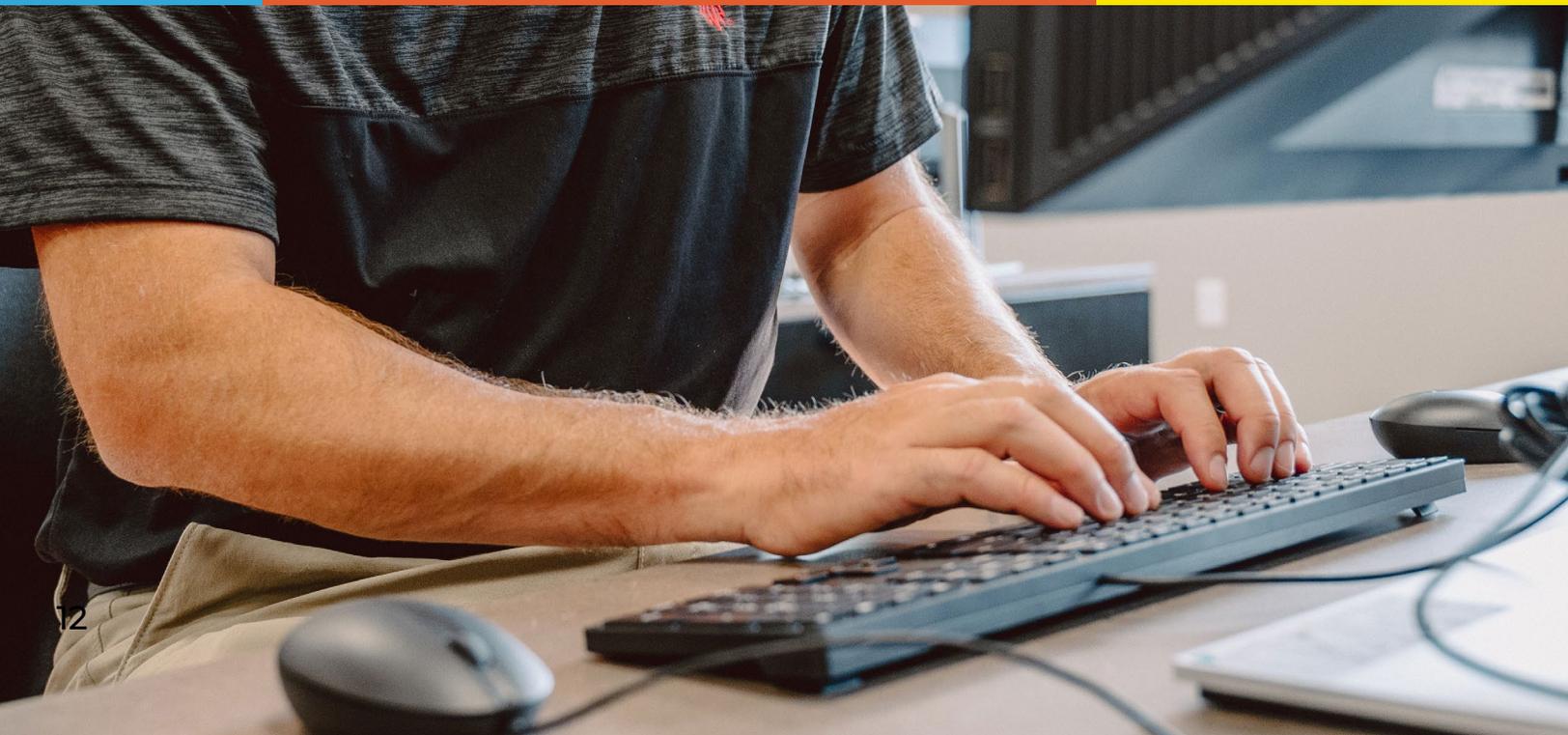
The North Dakota Tribal College System extends its deepest appreciation to all those who made the North Dakota Tribal Digital Literacy project possible. This initiative reflects the strength of our partnerships, the commitment of our educators, and the enthusiasm of our learners across North Dakota's Tribal Nations.

We gratefully acknowledge the **ND Tribal College System Board of Directors**, whose leadership and guidance ensured this project aligned with the needs and priorities of our Tribal communities. Our sincere thanks go to **Taya Spelhaug with Microsoft Philanthropies** for her continued support, advocacy, and partnership in expanding digital access and opportunity in Indian Country. We also thank **Steve Snow with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction**, whose funding support and collaboration made it possible for the five Tribal Colleges to host high-quality digital literacy trainings at no cost to participants.

Special recognition is extended to **Dr. Chad Davis**, co-writer of the grant and lead for the training team from Turtle Mountain College. His vision, curriculum expertise, and hands-on leadership were essential to the success of this project.

We also express our appreciation to the **instructors at each of the five North Dakota tribal colleges**—Cankdeska Cikana Community College, Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College, Sitting Bull College, Turtle Mountain College, and United Tribes Technical College—for their dedication, preparation, and commitment to fostering a supportive learning environment for every participant.

Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the **participants** who devoted their time, energy, and curiosity to strengthen their digital literacy skills. Their engagement and eagerness to learn are at the heart of this project and reinforce the importance of continuing this work.



Appendix A

Digital Literacy for Tribal Members (DLTM) Pre + Post Training Test Questions

Scan the QR code or visit the link to review the questions only. Please do not complete the form!

Participants take the test before training and again afterward to measure their learning and our trainings effectiveness.

<https://bit.ly/3MzWGFY>



Appendix B

Digital Literacy for Tribal Members (DLTM) Training Evaluation Questions

Scan the QR code or visit the link to review the questions only. Please do not complete the form! Participants' feedback helps us understand how well the training is received, assess the quality of the content, and gather insights on the instructor's effectiveness.

<https://bit.ly/44KGPSf>

