

# “I Have Someone To Talk To”

## Agency:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sioux Empire

## Program:

Native American Scholars

## Service:

Provides resources, such as a mentor, to empower Native American youth to graduate from high school. The program also provides a social relationship in the life of a Native student.

## Need:

The dropout rate for Native students in 2006-2007 was 13.5% compared to 4.13% for non-Native students in the Sioux Falls School District.

**Impact:** Support and guidance from a responsible adult is critical to the process that allows youth to grow into productive adults. 26 volunteers and 34 youth participated in the program in 2007.

Tiffany, a spirited freshman at Washington High School, sits in a chair next to Taté and laughs as they talk about music and dancing.

“I love to dance,” says Tiffany. “I taught Taté how to dance too!”

“She did teach me,” says Taté. “We like the same music. My iPod became her iPod. Now I’m trying to expose her to different music.”

Tiffany and Taté are a mentor match through Native American Scholars. The two were quickly matched and hit it off at their first meeting. They have become like family, sharing their experiences and encouraging each other along the way.

“Being of the same culture, I knew the struggles that other Natives would experience,” explains Taté. “I wanted to meet those head on and be able to make a difference. That’s when I decided to become a mentor.”

Today, there are many young Native boys and girls waiting for a mentor through Native American Scholars. The program provides participants a positive social relationship. The goal is for the mentor to be dependable and consistent in the message to make positive decisions and to complete high school and attend college.

“We spend much more than our four hours a month together,” says Taté. “Mentoring is part of my life now, and Tiffany is learning to like school and make better decisions. She has goals of attending college and becoming a drug and alcohol abuse counselor.”



Thanks to support from Sioux Empire United Way, 52 youth were matched with mentors during 2008. Giving Native youth, just like Tiffany, a friend they can trust for guidance and support. “I have someone to talk to. I can take a break from things and just be me.”