



# TRC Steering Committee E-Newsletter October 2021

## Greetings

Welcome to our inaugural e-newsletter! We miss meeting in-person with each of you as members of our Tribal Early Childhood Research Center (TRC) Steering Committee. An e-newsletter is no stand-in for catching up between sessions or over a meal, but we hope receiving a quarterly update about recent and upcoming TRC activities will help us stay connected and keep our virtual meetings efficient and focused. Continue reading to learn more about what the TRC team has been up to over the summer, and what's in store in the months ahead. We look forward to staying connected to you in this way!

Miigwech (Thank you),  
Michelle and the TRC Leadership Team

## TRC Mission & Priority Areas

Many of you have been connected to the TRC for years, and others are just beginning to engage with us. Our mission and priorities are provided here to build a shared understanding of the TRC's work across our Steering Committee members.

**Mission:** The TRC's mission is to grow the field of early childhood research in partnership with American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) Head Start, Home Visiting, and Child Care program leaders, AIAN community partners, early childhood researchers, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) federal staff, and a broad network of ACF and other early childhood initiatives and National Centers serving AIAN communities.

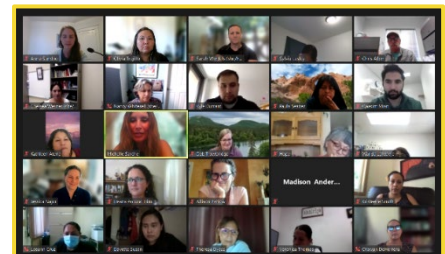
**Priority areas:** Our work is organized in three areas: 1) National Leadership, 2) Scientifically & Culturally Rigorous Research, and 3) Strategic Dissemination. We'll use these priority areas as an organizing structure for the updates below and for future e-newsletters.

## National Leadership

*The TRC works with AIAN communities and early childhood stakeholders to continually inform and refine TRC activities through partnership and consultation as well as training, professional development, and networking opportunities.*

### **2021 Virtual Summer Institute Early Childhood Research with Tribal Communities Course**

In partnership with the Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health (JHCAIH), the TRC offered our usual Summer Institute course *Early Childhood Research with Tribal Communities* virtually from July 19-23, 2021. Several members from the TRC Leadership Team and Steering Committee participated in the course as faculty and guest speakers. In keeping with course tradition, a TRC Steering Committee member who represents a tribal early childhood program was invited



to join the course core faculty. This year Tina Handeland (Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Manager and Supervisor at Waaswaaganing Nindoodem Family Support Program) joined us! The TRC is grateful for Tina's participation and wisdom offered in the course. The TRC and JHCAIH provided scholarship support for 10 scholars to take the course, two of whom are able to count the course credits toward their pursuit of the Johns Hopkins [Public Health Training Certificate for American Indian Health Professionals](#). We were also honored that our dear TRC friend and colleague WJ Strickland offered an opening and closing blessing for the course. WJ is deeply passionate about our work to serve the babies, and we continued to be inspired by that passion in all we do!



*"It has really helped me think about the questions I want to ask for my upcoming PhD project and be introduced to the research methods, ways, and terminology I will be using. Since I work in the ECE field as a Head Start Director, all the Early Childhood content was very applicable! I will be exploring new curriculums - Family Sprit and CETA (Common Elements Treatment Approach) and others - to determine what our program can benefit from. I have a list of professionals to utilize as resources for my future work."*

-Summer Institute Student, Course Evaluation Response

### **Upcoming Learning Circle on Indigenous Research Methodologies**

One of the topics we covered in the Summer Institute course was Indigenous research methodologies. If you are interested to learn more about Indigenous research methodologies and how they can be applied in your child development research or evaluation practice, please register to join our TRC Learning Circle as we read, reflect, and learn together in a series of virtual sessions:

- Thursday, October 21 from 2-3pm MDT | Indigenous Research History, Epistemologies, Ethics, Definitions, and Constructs
- Thursday, October 28 from 2-3pm MDT | Indigenous Research Methodologies Review
- Tuesday, November 9 from 2-3:30pm MST | Diverse Perspectives, Critical Reflections on Indigenous Research Methodologies -- A Conversation with [Dr. Shawn Wilson](#) (Opaskwayak Cree)

Invitations to join the sessions have been extended to select groups within the TRC's network to facilitate small group discussion, and registration is required. All TRC Steering Committee members are welcome to register [here](#).

### **Upcoming Native Children's Research Exchange**

The TRC, along with funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, supports the [Native Children's Research Exchange \(NCRE\) Conference](#). We were scheduled to have a conference in 2021 (our last one was in 2019), but due to ongoing COVID-19 concerns, we will not host an NCRE Conference this year. Instead, a smaller NCRE working group has been gathering virtually with a planned in-person meeting in December 2021 (barring public health guidelines to the contrary). Members of the TRC Leadership Team are active members of the working group that is developing a conceptual framework for understanding how recent events (e.g., global pandemic, awareness of racial injustice, and an ongoing drug epidemic) have revealed the severity of longstanding systemic inequities, impacted AIAN child and youth development, and presented opportunities for addressing those inequities in meaningful and foundational ways moving forward. The framework will be part of a special issue of the journal *Adversity and Resilience Science* and serve as inspiration for a call for papers that contribute to our understanding of these events and the

challenges and opportunities they present for Native children, families, and communities. Please stay tuned for more updates in future e-newsletters and Steering Committee meetings!

## Scientifically & Culturally Rigorous Research

*In consultation with partners and using a Community of Learning (CoL) approach, the TRC conducts research that aims to: 1) identify needs, effective practices, and integrated systems that acknowledge the challenges AIAN children face as well as the incredible resources provided by culture, community, and family, and 2) inform culturally meaningful measurement that is reliable and valid for understanding AIAN children's development and meaningful for the programs that serve AIAN children and families.*

### **Tribal PEDS Community of Learning**

The Pilot Exploration of Developmental Screening in Tribal Communities (Tribal PEDS) CoL recently completed a final report and held its last official CoL meeting as members transition to new TRC research activities. The final report and two research-informed resources, developed for practitioners administering developmental screeners to AIAN children and for AIAN families supporting a child through developmental screening, are attached. For questions about the Tribal PEDS CoL or resources, contact Nancy Whitesell ([nancy.whitesell@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:nancy.whitesell@cuanschutz.edu)).

### **Early Relational Health Community of Learning**

This TRC CoL was recently established to explore early relational health, a relatively new term in infant and child development that acknowledges the importance of positive, nurturing relationships in promoting development and overall family well-being. The CoL will develop a framework that acknowledges the context of AIAN communities and consider whether new measures are needed to reflect the values and characteristics of Indigenous populations. The next CoL meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 25 from 12-1pm MDT. Please contact Nancy Whitesell ([nancy.whitesell@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:nancy.whitesell@cuanschutz.edu)) if you are interested in joining this CoL.

### **Understanding Early Childhood Needs, Effective Practices, and Implementation Support in the Wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

This CoL is in the process of forming. It will build on past TRC CoL work to identify tribal early childhood needs and priorities, but with careful consideration for young child, family, and early childhood workforce needs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated existing challenges, brought on new challenges, and presented new opportunities. Please stay tuned for more updates! Contact Michelle Sarche ([michelle.sarche@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:michelle.sarche@cuanschutz.edu)) if you are interested to learn more or join us in this effort.

### **CLASS & Native Language and Culture Communities of Learning**

The Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) CoL formed nearly ten years ago to examine AIAN Head Start program administrators' cultural and practice perspectives on the CLASS. Over time, CLASS CoL members have continued to collaborate, define new research questions, and participate in the TRC's Native Language and Culture CoL, which is exploring the Native Culture and Language in the Classroom Observation Tool (NCLCO) used in the AIAN Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (AIAN FACES). Today, as these two CoLs deepen their knowledge of the CLASS and NCLCO measures, they also collaborate to share lessons and inform [new research led by Jessica Barnes-Najor, Ann Cameron, and Christine Sims through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Interdisciplinary Research Leaders program](#). To learn more or join the CLASS and Native Language and Culture CoLs, please contact Jessica Barnes-Najor ([barnes33@msu.edu](mailto:barnes33@msu.edu)).

## Strategic Dissemination

The TRC leverages multiple communication channels to share resources and research on AIAN children's development in the context of family, community, culture, and tribal early childhood programs to facilitate research-to-practice and practice-to-research knowledge transfer.

### Recent Presentations & Publications

TRC Leadership Team and Steering Committee members presented at the following events with archived recordings:

- The ACF National Research Conference on Early Childhood, Invited Talk on [Using Data to Tell "Our" Stories Together: Collaborations in Early Education and Care Research](#)
- Michigan State University, University Outreach and Engagement Workshop: [Co-Creation of Knowledge and Integration of Values for Equitable Research – Lessons from Indigenous Early Childhood Community Research Partnerships](#) (Recording not available, but it was such a powerful session that we hope to repeat it as a TRC event. Stay tuned!)
- Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children [Hearing on Early Child Development](#)
- ACF's Transforming Tribal Early Childhood Webinar Series session on [Addressing Mental Health Among Children, Staff, & Families in Tribal Early Childhood Programs](#) (The series kick-off webinar is also archived [here](#).)

Members of the TRC Leadership Team and Steering Committee have participated in the AIAN FACES Workgroup since its inception and recently shared their experiences in a publication titled [Perspectives of Region XI Head Start Federal, Research, and Program Partners in Carrying out a National Study of American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Children, Families, and Programs](#). Check it out to learn more about the Workgroup's lessons learned throughout the development and launch of this groundbreaking study.

### Upcoming Events

The TRC will be featured as a case example of community engagement in a federally sponsored research center as part of OPRE's upcoming Methods Meeting titled *Enhancing Rigor, Relevance, and Equity in Research and Evaluation through Community Engagement*. See the full agenda and register for the meeting, which takes place on October 27-28, [here](#).

The TRC will also take part in the next session of ACF's Transforming Tribal Early Childhood Webinar Series on Monday, November 8. The session is a two-part event that will focus on *Promoting Equity and Celebrating Resilience in Tribal Early Childhood Programs*. Registration is forthcoming from ACF, so please stay tuned!

## Join us for the next TRC Steering Committee Meeting

We look forward to seeing you at the next virtual TRC Steering Committee Meeting on Tuesday, November 16 at 8am AK / 9am PT / 10am MT / 11am CT / 12pm ET! You should have received a calendar invitation with the Zoom link (<https://ucdenver.zoom.us/j/96546740606>). If it's not on your calendar, please email Michelle Sarche ([michelle.sarche@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:michelle.sarche@cuanschutz.edu)). We will record the session for those who are not able to attend.



Our next in-person TRC Steering Committee meeting is tentatively planned for Thursday, June 30, 2022 in Arlington, VA – one day following the [ACF National Research Conference on Early Childhood \(NRCEC\)](#), as we have done in the past. We had a great group at our post-NRCEC TRC Steering Committee gathering in 2018! We will follow-up after the new year with more information.

## Learn with Us

In addition to reviewing resources for the TRC's upcoming Learning Circle on Indigenous Research Methodologies in recent months, we've enjoyed learning more about leveraging science to inform policy from Jack Shonkoff at [Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child](#). This summer, Dr. Shonkoff briefed lawmakers, human services systems leaders, intervention developers, physicians, other scientists, and the public on the importance of connecting increasing knowledge about brain development to physical and mental health across the lifespan in our policies. To learn with us, view Dr. Shonkoff's presentation [here](#) (presentation starts at approximately 15min 30sec into the recording).

## Stay in Touch



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Email us: [tribalearlychildhood@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:tribalearlychildhood@cuanschutz.edu)

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