



Co-creating a measure of Indigenous early relational wellbeing practices using group concept mapping

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Background

- Culturally aligned measures of early child development are sorely needed in Indigenous communities and Tribal early childhood programs.
- To center equity and the voices of those with lived experience in the research process, the Tribal Early Childhood Research Center is using a Community of Learning (CoL) approach to improve measurement outcomes for Indigenous children and families through conceptualizing and measuring practices that promote early relational wellbeing (ERW) among Indigenous children (prenatal through age five).
- Group concept mapping (GCM) is a mixed methods approach through which qualitative ideas about an issue are generated and converted into quantitative data that produce a common structure or concept map.¹⁻²
- GCM includes three phases: brainstorming, sorting, and rating. GCM is increasingly being applied in Indigenous communities to understand and address complex public health issues.³⁻⁵

Objectives

- Together with our CoL, we used a GCM approach to: (1) systematically gather perspectives on relational practices that promote Indigenous ERW, and (2) generate a concept map and items to inform development of a culturally grounded measure of Indigenous ERW practices.

Methods

- Using groupwisdom™, an online platform for conducting GCM, we invited our CoL and other early childhood practitioners, researchers, policy makers, and other experts (N=106) to:
 - generate a list of relational practices that promote ERW among Indigenous children prenatal through age five,
 - sort those practices into meaningful subgroups, and
 - rate practices by level of importance and presence in their communities.
- Using these data, we produced a concept map of Indigenous ERW practices (Figure 1) and worked with our CoL to refine an item pool for a measure of those.

Figure 1. Concept map of Indigenous early relational wellbeing practices with points representing items or relational practices and clusters representing dimensions of Indigenous ERW

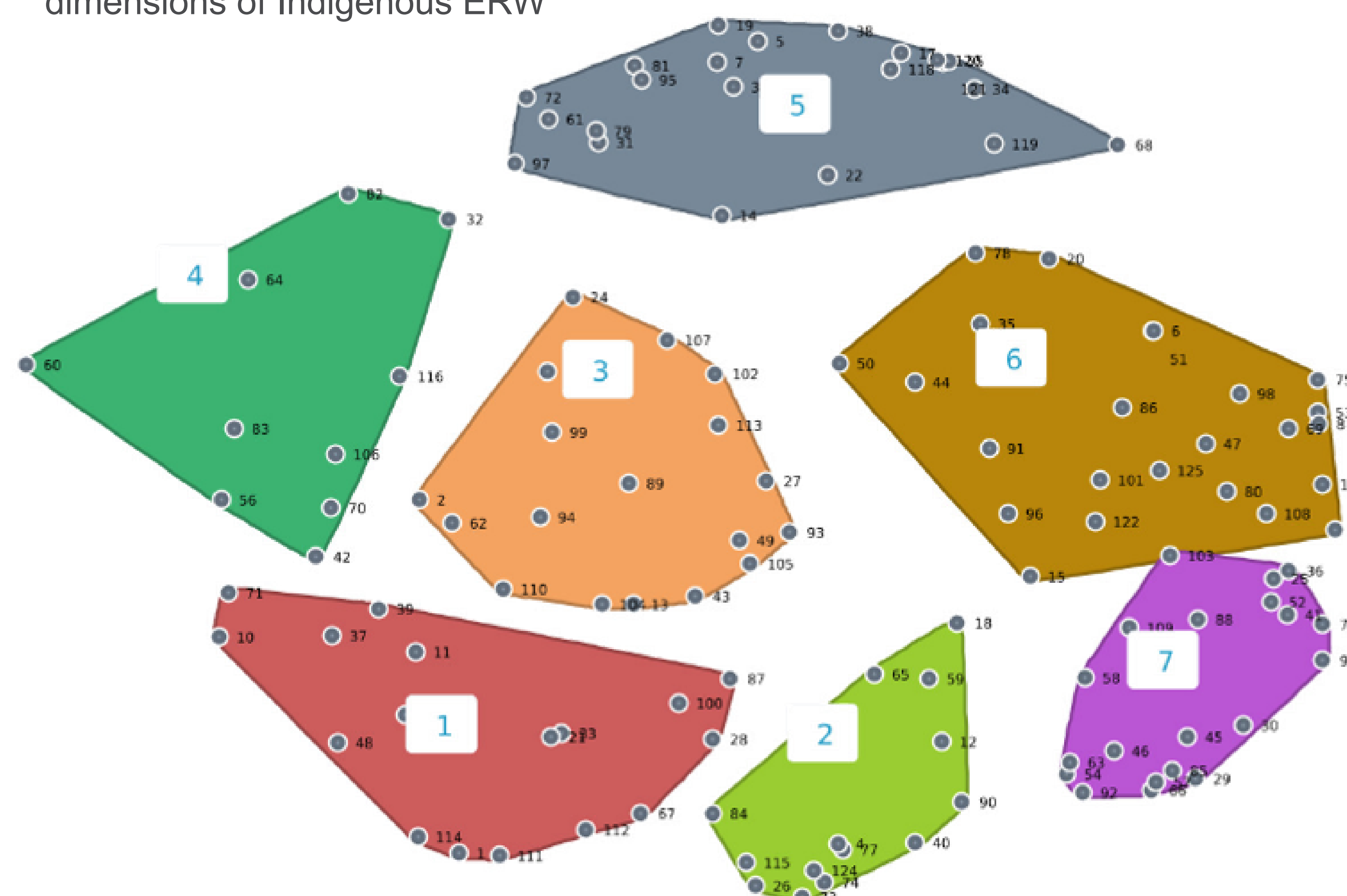
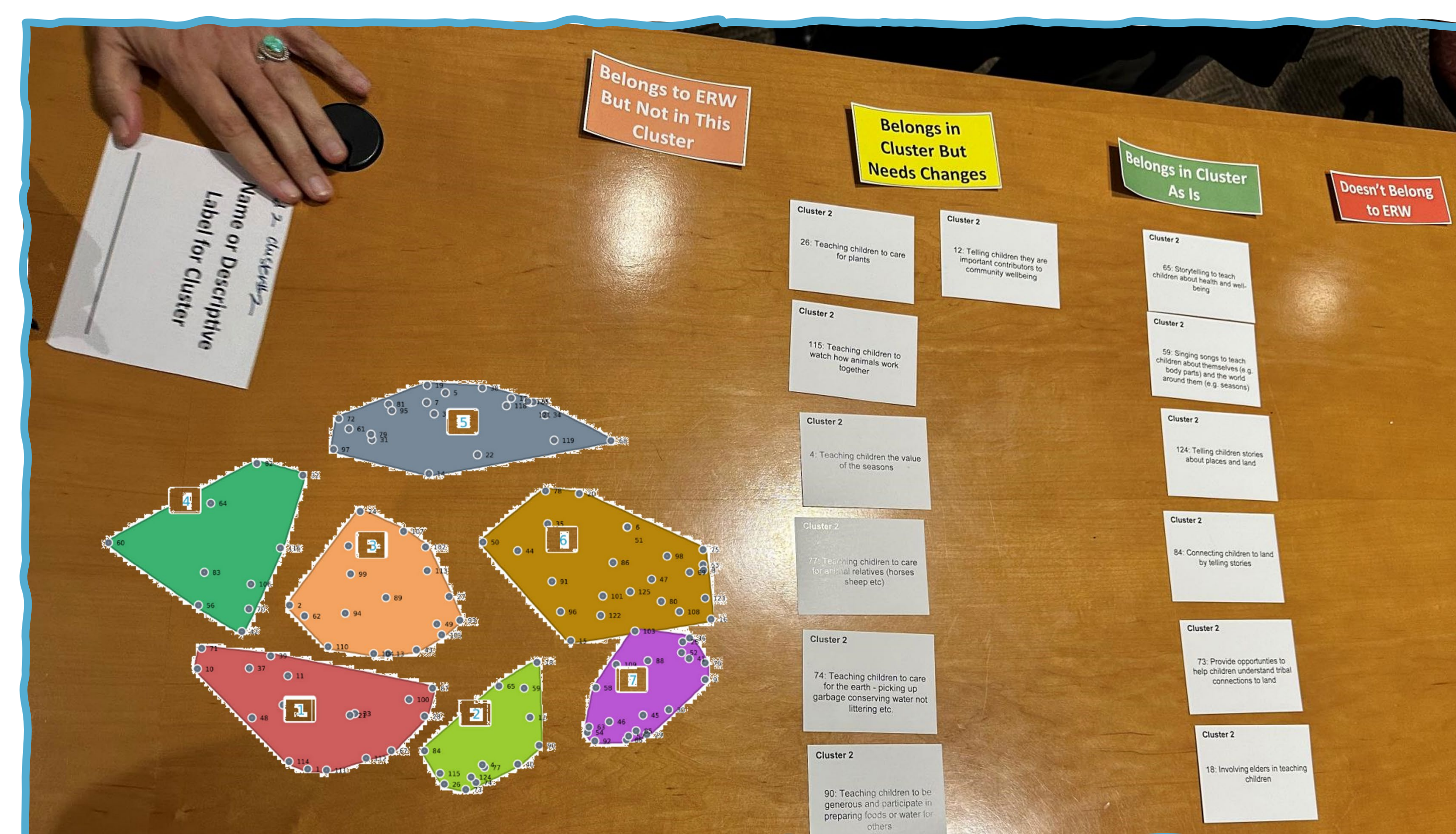


Figure 2. Working with our Community of Learning and Steering Committee to refine the item pool of relational practices within each cluster



Key Findings

- The GCM process generated 125 relational practices that promote Indigenous ERW in young children
- Participants providing demographic data (n=60) represented diverse regions in the U.S.; 68% identified as American Indian/Alaska Native; and 52% were early childhood practitioners or other experts.
- Relational practices were sorted and rated by approximately 36 participants. After engaging the CoL in interpreting results, we decided a seven-cluster solution was optimal.
- Ongoing discussions as a CoL and with our Steering Committee partners (Figure 2) helped us further refine items resulting in a pool of 85 items that will be pre-tested and pilot tested with Tribal early childhood programs in fall 2024.

Implications

- GCM has helped generate collective knowledge and perspectives of relational practices that promote ERW in Indigenous communities and families.
- This process not only centers Indigenous knowledge and values of early child development and family wellbeing, but also informs the development of a culturally grounded measure of practices that promote Indigenous ERW through generating items and dimensions from an array of community partners.
- Upon validation, a measure of Indigenous ERW has potential to be applied across Tribal early childhood research and evaluation to deepen understanding of and build evidence for positive child development in Indigenous communities and contexts.

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