



TRC Steering Committee E-Newsletter December 2021

(Season's) Greetings

This e-newsletter highlights the TRC's activities over the last three months and gives you a preview of what's to come in the new year. As 2021 comes to an end, we want to express our continued gratitude for your contributions to the TRC Steering Committee. We hope you have a very happy, healthy holiday season! We look forward to connecting with you again in the new year!

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



TRC Mission & Priority Areas

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.

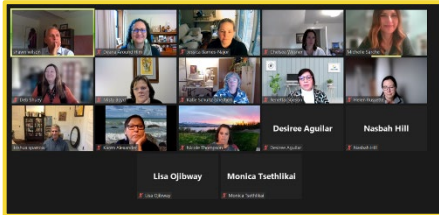
National Leadership

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.



Learning Circle on Indigenous Research Methodologies

In collaboration with TRC partner, Brazelton Touchpoints Center, the TRC hosted a virtual Learning Circle on Indigenous research methodologies in late-October and early-November. The three-part series invited participants to read and discuss foundational articles summarizing the history of and critical perspectives on Indigenous research methodologies and consider their application in child development research and evaluation practice. [Dr. Shawn Wilson](#) (Opaskwayak Cree), author of key readings selected for the Learning Circle, joined the final session. Several participants noted that the sessions provided a much-needed supplement to their training and scholarship and expressed a desire for continued opportunities to grow their understanding and application of Indigenous research methodologies in their work. We're thrilled to know this format and focus is of interest to our network, as planning for a second Learning Circle focused on Indigenous Land-based Learning and Healing is already underway! If you missed the first series and would like copies of the materials, please contact Michelle Sarche (michelle.sarche@cuanschutz.edu). Information on the second TRC Learning Circle will be shared early next year.



Native Children's Research Exchange Working Group Convening

The TRC, along with funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, supports the [Native Children's Research Exchange \(NCRE\) Conference](#). Due to ongoing COVID-19 concerns, a smaller working group gathering was held virtually in early December in place of a full, in-person conference. Several TRC Leadership Team and Steering Committee members participated in the two-day event, which began with Dr. Jessica Ullrich (NCRE Scholar and TRC Early Relational Health CoL member) presenting her *Indigenous Connectedness Framework for Wholeness and Healing*. Subsequent sessions focused on refining 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 inequities in meaningful and foundational ways moving forward. In response to priorities by both ACF and NIDA, 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 lift up solutions for addressing substance use and disorder and its impact on AIAN children's development. Stay tuned for more updates in future e-newsletters and Steering Committee meetings!

Academy of Community Engagement Scholarship

Two of our own, Michelle Sarche (TRC Leadership Team) and Ann Cameron (TRC Steering Committee), have been recognized by the Academy of Community Engagement Scholarship (ACES) for their leadership in community-engaged research and practice. As new ACES inductees, Michelle and Ann have been invited to participate in an induction ceremony early next year. Inductees are selected based on accomplishments that demonstrate leadership of mutually beneficial collaborations between institutions of higher education and communities of place, practice, interest, action, or circumstance. Learn more about ACES and read a press release about this honor [here](#). Congratulations Michelle and Ann! You make us shine!



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 for use by the programs that serve AIAN children and families.

Tribal PEDS Community of Learning

Although the Pilot Exploration of Developmental Screening in Tribal Communities (Tribal PEDS) CoL held its last official meeting in September 2021, the outputs of this work continue to be shared! Two manuscripts recently received Tribal IRB approval and were submitted to the *Infant Mental Health Journal* as companion pieces. The Tribal PEDS work was also the basis of an abstract submitted for the 2022 Society for Prevention Research Conference and a poster proposal for ACF's 2022 National Research Conference on Early Childhood. More recently, the team was contacted by the Chickasaw Nation Project LAUNCH team to share Tribal PEDS findings and resources to inform their collaboration with CDC focused on training and technical assistance for early childhood screening. For questions about the Tribal PEDS CoL or resources, contact Nancy Whitesell (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 most recent CoL meeting held in November encouraged members to consider what fosters relational and cultural connections in tribal early childhood. The CoL has recently completed a literature review and continues to develop an ERH framework that acknowledges the context of AIAN communities. A poster proposal focused on the ERH CoL literature review was submitted for ACF's 2022 National Research Conference on Early Childhood, and AIAN FACES 2015 and 2019 data have been requested to support future activities. The next CoL meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 24th from 12-1pm MST. Please contact Nancy Whitesell (nancy.whitesell@cuanschutz.edu) if you are interested in joining this CoL.

Understanding Early Childhood Needs, Effective Practices, and Implementation Supports Amidst and Looking Beyond 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) if you are interested to learn more or join us in this effort.

The 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. 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). The longstanding collaborations and work of these CoLs were recently highlighted in a TRC presentation at OPRE's Annual Methods Meeting (more below), and a poster proposal focused on work supported by the Native Language and Culture CoL was recently submitted for ACF's 2022 National Research Conference on Early Childhood. To learn more or join the CLASS and Native Language and Culture CoLs, please contact Jessica Barnes-Najor (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:

- ACF's Transforming Tribal Early Childhood Webinar Series two-part session on Promoting Equity and Celebrating Resilience in Tribal Early Childhood Programs, with opening presentations by [Michelle Sarche](#) and [Melissa Walls](#).
- OPRE's Methods Meeting titled [Enhancing Rigor, Relevance, and Equity in Research and Evaluation through Community Engagement](#), where the TRC was featured as a case example of community engagement in a federally sponsored research center. TRC Leadership Team members, Deana Around Him and Jessica Barnes-Najor, were joined by Ann Cameron (TRC Steering Committee) to showcase how community engagement is embedded throughout the TRC's activities to foster cultural and scientific rigor. The CLASS and Native Language and Culture CoLs were highlighted as a specific example. Slides from the session are available [here](#).

Upcoming Events & Activities

The TRC has been awarded additional funding to deepen our understanding of economic well-being among AIAN children and families. We will hold a kick-off meeting with our federal partners on January 27, 2022 and have submitted a proposal to present findings from an initial literature review on the topic at the [2022 Research and Evaluation Conference on Self-Sufficiency](#), scheduled to take place in Washington, D.C. in June.

TRC Steering Committee Meetings

We were glad to connect with many of you during our November virtual TRC Steering Committee Meeting! If you missed the meeting, you can email Michelle Sarche (michelle.sarche@cuanschutz.edu) to request the slides or view the recording [here](#). The agenda included brief updates on our National Leadership and Strategic Dissemination activities, as well as an in-depth overview of recent activities from the Early Relational Health CoL presented by Chelsea Wesner (DrPH student and ERH CoL co-Lead).



"Create space where knowledge can emerge."



Shawn Wilson (Opaskwayak Cree)

As we have done in the past, our next in-person TRC Steering Committee meeting was planned to be held in conjunction with the [ACF National Research Conference on Early Childhood \(NRCEC\)](#). NRCEC 2022 is scheduled for June 27-29, 2022 in Arlington, VA. Unfortunately, these dates fully overlap with the NIHSDA annual conference, and we continue to face COVID challenges that could affect our ability to travel and gather. We will circle back to this discussion with all of you after the new year to determine what will be best – including the possibility of holding our meeting in conjunction with the postponed full NCRE conference, tentatively planned for September 2022.

Learn with Us

We wanted to share three resources that we've recently enjoyed that may also be of interest to you:

- [Season 2 of the This Land Podcast](#) hosted by Rebecca Nagle, which investigates strategic efforts to dismantle the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).
- [NIH's 2019 Traditional Medicine Summit Report: Maintaining and Protecting Culture through Healing](#), which highlights themes that emerged from a first-of-its-kind convening of approximately 40 traditional medicine and Native health care practitioners, medicine men and women, and AIAN researchers who discussed how biomedical research can support Native communities.
- The 2021 White House Tribal Nations Summit, which featured panels on health, education, the environment, and more, held on [November 15](#) and [November 16](#).

Stay in Touch



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