



# TRC Steering Committee E-Newsletter April 2022

## Greetings

Spring has arrived! As we transitioned from the cold days of January to the slightly warmer temperatures of April, the TRC team stayed busy building on progress from 2021, launching new initiatives, and getting things ready for upcoming conferences and convenings. We hope that the first few months of 2022 have similarly been a time of growth for each of you! This e-newsletter features some of our recent activities and shares a preview of what's in store in the months ahead. We look forward to connecting with you for our next virtual Steering Committee meeting on April 19<sup>th</sup> from 9-10am MDT!

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, Child Care, and soon, TANF 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. Please read on for updates in each of these areas!

## National Leadership

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

**Learning Circle on Indigenous Land-based Learning**



In collaboration with TRC partners at the Brazelton Touchpoints Center we are planning a second virtual Learning Circle. The Learning Circle, planned for three Tuesdays in May, will build on the success of last fall's [inaugural Learning Circle, which focused on Indigenous research methodologies](#). The May Learning Circle will focus on Indigenous land-based learning in early care and education. The three-part series will include three early childhood teams from the US and Canada who will share and reflect on their work, wherever they are in their Indigenous land-based learning journey. Together, we will learn how Indigenous land-based learning is being defined and implemented in diverse tribal communities and draw on lessons on how this approach can support the well-being of young Indigenous children and families. Watch your inbox for invitations, and contact Michelle Sarche ([michelle.sarche@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:michelle.sarche@cuanschutz.edu)) with questions.

### **New Initiative on Family Economic Well-being**

The TRC was recently awarded supplemental funding from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to deepen our understanding of family economic well-being (FEW) within AIAN communities and early childhood settings. We held a kick-off meeting with federal partners in January and plans are underway to complete a scoping review of peer-reviewed and grey literature by late this summer. As part of this new initiative, we will expand our Steering Committee to include TANF program leaders and researchers whose work focuses on FEW in AIAN communities. Consistent with our approach to TRC activities, we will also form a Community of Learning (CoL) to help interpret findings from the scoping review and develop next steps for understanding and measuring FEW in ways that are culturally and contextually aligned with the needs of AIAN children and families. As things take shape, we will keep the Steering Committee informed and share opportunities for you to engage in this important work. In the meantime, questions can be directed to Chelsea Wesner ([chelsea.wesner@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:chelsea.wesner@cuanschutz.edu)).

### **Request for Information on Technical Assistance Needs and Priorities for Early Childhood Development Programs in AIAN Communities**

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is **requesting information by April 5, 2022**, on the technical assistance (TA) needs and priorities for implementation and coordination of early childhood development programs in AIAN communities (e.g., head start, child care, home visiting, preschool, early intervention and special education). ACF will analyze public comments to support the development, improvement, and implementation of TA efforts and strategies to assist Tribal communities and programs in carrying out and coordinating early childhood services and initiatives. Questions, comments, and supplementary documents can be submitted to [OCCTribal@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:OCCTribal@acf.hhs.gov) with "Tribal TA RFI" as the subject line. The full request for information is available [here](#). The TRC Leadership Team is preparing



comments on behalf of our center. If you have ideas or suggestions that you would like to share, please email Michelle Sarche ([michelle.sarche@cuanschultz.edu](mailto:michelle.sarche@cuanschultz.edu)). You all have important perspectives to offer in response to this request! If you don't contact us, we hope that you will consider submitting comments directly following the guidance in the request for information.

## 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**

The Pilot Exploration of Developmental Screening in Tribal Communities (Tribal PEDS) CoL held its final meeting last fall, and outputs of this work continue to be shared! Two manuscripts have been accepted for publication:

- Whitesell, N. et al. *Community perspectives on developmental screening of American Indian and Alaska Native children.*
- Asdigian, N. et al. *Exploring the feasibility of validating early developmental screening tools for American Indian and Alaska Native children.*

We will distribute the publications once they are released. In the meantime, please share the developmental screening resources that were developed for [practitioners](#) and [families](#) with your networks. For questions about the Tribal PEDS CoL, contact Nancy Whitesell ([nancy.whitesell@cuanschultz.edu](mailto:nancy.whitesell@cuanschultz.edu)).

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

The early relational health (ERH) CoL was formed to explore how early relationships promote development and overall family well-being in Indigenous communities. The CoL recently held its eighth session. So far, the TRC team and CoL members have completed a literature review, continued to refine an ERH framework that acknowledges the context of AIAN communities, and started to identify practices that foster relational and cultural connections in early childhood for Indigenous children. In the next phase of this work, the CoL will apply Group Concept Mapping to thematically group relational practices and consider how they could be understood through an Indigenous ERH measure. The team will have access to AIAN FACES 2015 and 2019 data to support future activities. The next CoL meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 25th from 12-1pm MT. Please contact Nancy Whitesell ([nancy.whitesell@cuanschultz.edu](mailto:nancy.whitesell@cuanschultz.edu)) if you have questions about this work.

### **Understanding Early Childhood Needs, Effective Practices, and Implementation Supports Amidst and Looking Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic**

This CoL is still under development. 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@cuanschultz.edu](mailto:michelle.sarche@cuanschultz.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). CoL members recently received word that a manuscript on the psychometric properties of the NCLCO was accepted for publication in the Journal of Indigenous Early Childhood Education. Team members also have plans to analyze cultural socialization items from the AIAN FACES 2015 parent survey for a call for papers for a special issue of Child Development, which will focus on Indigenous child development. 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.*

### Updated TRC Website

The [TRC website](#) has been updated! We'll be making some minor tweaks over the coming months to add content related to our new family economic well-being initiative, but we hope the updated structure makes it easy to see our core activities and outputs. If you have any feedforward to offer, please send it to Deana Around Him ([daroundhim@childtrends.org](mailto:daroundhim@childtrends.org)).

### Recent Presentations

TRC Leadership Team and Steering Committee members have presented at the following events:

- Dr. Deana Around Him, TRC Leadership Team member, presented to the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children in a [hearing on Early Childhood Development Theory and Research](#) alongside Dr. Jack Shonkoff (Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University) and Barbara Fabre (Indigenous Visioning LLC) on January 28, 2022.
- Dr. Jessica Barnes-Najor, TRC Leadership Team member, presented in ACF's Transforming Tribal Early Childhood Webinar Series session focused on [Opportunities and Challenges in Supporting and Growing the Tribal Early Childhood Workforce](#) on March 14, 2022. Dr. Barnes-Najor's presentation served as a foundation for a panel that featured lessons from Kimber Olson (Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association), Barbara Moffit (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma), and Lee Turney (Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe).
- ACF recently hosted a [2022 Indigenous Programs Conference](#) where the TRC had the opportunity to share successes from our *Early Childhood Research with Tribal Communities* summer institute course offered in collaboration with the Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health. Dr. Aleta Meyer facilitated the session titled, [Growing Our Own: Building Early Childhood Education Career Pathways in Native American Communities](#) in which Drs. Michelle Sarche and Allison Barlow, from the TRC Leadership Team, presented.

### Upcoming Events & Activities

The TRC has submitted several poster and presentation abstracts for upcoming conferences. Dr. Michelle Sarche will present in a National Research Conference on Early Childhood (NRCEC) session focused on Addressing Historical Inequities in Early Care and Education in June, and the TRC is awaiting notification on additional poster and presentation submissions to: [NRCEC](#), the [Society of Prevention Research](#) (SPR) annual meeting held in late-May/early-June, and the [Research and Evaluation Conference on Self-Sufficiency](#) (RECS) held in June.

## TRC Steering Committee Meetings

We look forward to connecting with many of you during in our upcoming virtual Steering Committee meeting scheduled for April 19<sup>th</sup> from 9-10am MDT. You should have received a calendar invite with this Zoom link: <https://ucdenver.zoom.us/j/94870434395>. If you do not see the meeting invitation and you would like it resent, please email Michelle Sarche ([michelle.sarche@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:michelle.sarche@cuanschutz.edu)). Our next in-person TRC Steering Committee meeting is planned to occur in conjunction with the [Native Children's Research Exchange](#) conference in Denver, CO, which is scheduled to take place September 15-16, 2022. Please stay tuned for more information on that in the coming month or two. Assuming we can proceed as planned for an in-person meeting, it will be so wonderful to see you all *in person* again!



## Learn with Us

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

- [U.S. Will Rename 660 Mountains, Rivers and More to Remove Racist Word](#), an article from the Smithsonian Magazine detailing efforts to identify and replace names for sites that currently feature a derogatory term referring to Indigenous women.
- [Economic Outcomes for Indigenous Peoples in the United States Following the Great Recession](#), a brief on recent economic trends for Indigenous peoples by Dr. Randall Akee.

## Stay in Touch



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

***The TRC is supported by the ACF Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE)  
under cooperative agreement 90PH0030.***