



# TRC Steering Committee E-Newsletter December 2022

## Season's Greetings & Reflections

In many Native cultures, winter is a time for reflection, storytelling, and rest. With the winter solstice upon us, we hope that the coming months have these things in-store for each of you! This year has been full of both challenging and positive transitions across our TRC network, from returns to in-person events, to new personal and professional roles, and increased national attention to the strengths and needs of Indigenous Peoples. Thank you for being a continued spark of kindness and light through it all.



We appreciate the work that you do with Indigenous children and families, as well as the grace and partnership you've shown us at the TRC. I invite you to continue reading to learn more about our many recent and upcoming activities. We look forward to reconnecting with you in 2023!

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

### **An excerpt from *Once the World Was Perfect* by Joy Harjo (Mvskoke Nation)**

*"There we were,  
Right back where we had started.  
We were bumping into each other  
In the dark.  
And now we had no place to live, since we didn't know  
How to live with each other.  
Then one of the stumbling ones took pity on another  
And shared a blanket.  
A spark of kindness made a light.  
The light made an opening in the darkness.  
Everyone worked together to make a ladder.  
A Wind Clan person climbed out first into the next world,  
And then the other clans, the children of those clans, their children,  
And their children, all the way through time—  
To now, into this morning light to you."*

## 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 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.*

### TRC at the Native Children's Research Exchange Conference in Denver, CO – September 2022

TRC network members – including many of you! – attended the Native Children's Research Exchange (NCRE) Conference that took place September 15-16 in Denver, CO. The conference theme was, "Lifting up Solutions Grounded in Indigenous Culture and Wisdom to Address Substance Misuse Disorder and Support Indigenous Children's Development in the Face of the Intersecting Challenges of our Time."



There were over 100 conference participants this year, including researchers, community research partners, early childhood and other youth-serving program staff, and federal staff from ACF and the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Among those attending were 9 student, early career, and community scholars. The next NCRE conference will be held September 14-15, 2023, in Denver, CO. Please stay tuned for more information after the new year, but in the meantime, mark your calendars – we hope you can join us!

### TRC at the National Indian Education Association Convention in Oklahoma City, OK – October 2022



TRC Leadership Team members, Drs. Michelle Sarche and Deana Around Him attended the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) Annual Convention held October 5-8 in Oklahoma City, OK. Diana Cournoyer, NIEA Executive Director and TRC Steering Committee member, invited the TRC to a partner's breakfast at the new First Americans Museum (FAM). Dr. Sarche presented on the American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (AIAN FACES) data and Dr. Around Him presented on the TRC Community of Learning (CoL) process and ongoing CoL activities.



## Informing National Efforts & Scholarship

TRC team members often add their perspectives and knowledge of Tribal early childhood development, programs and services, and strengths and needs to national efforts and scholarly activities. A few recent and ongoing activities are described below. Please visit the links to learn more about these activities.



- Brazelton Touchpoints Center (TRC partner) hosted a *Learning to Listen: Conversations for Change* webinar with Dr. Melissa Walls (Associate Professor at Johns Hopkins Center for Indigenous Health, also a TRC partner). In the webinar titled [Celebrating Indigenous Family and Cultural Strengths & Promoting Health Equity](#), Dr. Walls shared examples of Indigenous family strengths in the form of benevolent childhood experiences, positive cultural identity, and other socio-cultural factors.
- Dr. Deana Around Him (TRC Leadership Team) joined the [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Forum for Children's Well-being](#) as a committee member. The Forum aims to inform a forward-looking agenda for building a stronger research and practice base around the development and implementation of effective and equitable programs, practices, and policies to promote cognitive, affective, and behavioral health for all children, adolescents, and emerging adults.
- Drs. Aleta Meyer (ACF Office of Planning, Research, & Evaluation) and Deana Around Him (TRC Leadership Team) presented in a webinar hosted by the American Evaluation Association's Indigenous Peoples in Evaluation Topical Interest Group titled [Conducting Research and Evaluation in a Good Way with Indigenous Nations and People: Bridging Indigenous and Western Rigor](#) (passcode: vY7^y6JU). The session highlighted ACF's [Roadmap for Collaborative and Effective Evaluation in Tribal Communities](#) as a resource and shared examples collaboration from the TRC and Multisite Implementation Evaluation of Tribal Home Visiting study (MUSE).

## 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.*

### Early Relational Health CoL

The Early Relational Health (ERH) CoL has been sharing their work and continuing to develop an understanding of Indigenous ERH through data collection and analysis. In September, Chelsea Wesner, Dr. Nancy Whitesell, and Lisa Martin facilitated roundtable discussions with the TRC Steering Committee where they presented a draft Indigenous ERH framework and led participants in a card sorting activity focused on practices that support development of Indigenous ERH.



Chelsea, Dr. Jessica Barnes-Najor, and Tina Handeland also held a session on the ERH CoL's work at the NCRE conference. Ongoing ERH CoL activities include 1) use of group concept mapping to understand how practices identified by those who work with Indigenous children and families relate to one another and support child development, 2) analysis of AIAN FACES 2019 data to identify items that may assess Indigenous ERH, and 3) development of a manuscript that will describe the creation of an Indigenous ERH framework. The next ERH CoL meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 23rd. Please contact Dr. 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 CoL**

This CoL builds on past TRC CoL work to identify Tribal early childhood needs and priorities, with an emphasis on young child, family, and early childhood workforce needs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In September, Dr. Michelle Sarche and Dr. Laura Hoard facilitated roundtable discussions with the TRC Steering Committee focused on identifying topics related to early childhood workforce needs and lessons learned throughout the pandemic. The CoL also convened in December to begin outlining an approach for understanding federal early childhood funding available to support AIAN children and families. The next CoL meeting will occur on Tuesday, January 10. Please, contact Dr. Sarche ([michelle.sarche@cuanschultz.edu](mailto:michelle.sarche@cuanschultz.edu)) if you are interested to learn more or join us in this effort.

### **The Native Language and Culture CoL**

Dr. Jessica Barnes-Najor and Mavany Verdugo, from the Native Language and Culture (NL&C) CoL, facilitated roundtable discussions with the TRC Steering Committee in September. The facilitators described recent updates to the Native Culture and Language in the Classroom Observation Tool (NCLCO) used in the AIAN Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (AIAN FACES) and led participants through an activity that allowed them to suggest additional revisions to the instrument. The NL&C CoL is continuing to develop manuscripts that will highlight psychometric analyses of NCLCO data from AIAN FACES.



Dr. Barnes-Najor and Lana Garcia also presented work from an ongoing pilot study that grew from the TRC CLASS and NL&C CoLs at the recent NCRE Conference. The pilot study will use the revised NCLCO with video and live observations to understand Native language and culture in Head Start classrooms. To learn more or join the NL&C CoL, please contact Dr. Barnes-Najor ([barnes33@msu.edu](mailto:barnes33@msu.edu)).

### **Family Economic Well-being CoL**

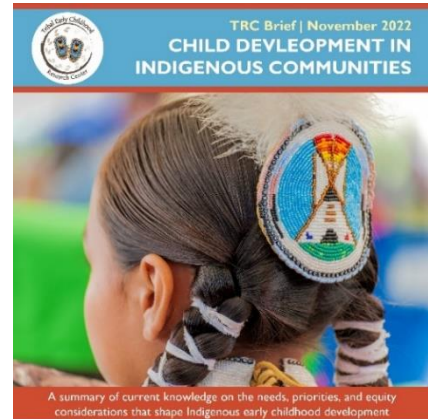
The Family Economic Well-being (FEW) CoL is focused on understanding family economic well-being within AIAN communities and early childhood settings. The FEW CoL's primary goals are to conduct a scoping review and implement a process for understanding and measuring FEW in ways that are culturally and contextually aligned with the needs of AIAN children and families. The initial approach and plans for this work were shared by Chelsea Wesner at the September TRC Steering Committee meeting. Participants were invited to use flip chart paper to create an image or share key words related to Indigenous FEW. A scoping review to understand how FEW is described in existing literature for AIAN children and families is underway, with plans to present the results in a manuscript and add members to the CoL in early 2023. To learn more about the FEW CoL, contact Chelsea Wesner ([chelsea.wesner@cuanschultz.edu](mailto:chelsea.wesner@cuanschultz.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.

### New TRC Brief on Child Development in Indigenous Communities

To celebrate Native American Heritage Month in November, the TRC released a new brief titled [Child Development in Indigenous Communities: Promoting equity and resilience across a continuum of Tribal early childhood programs and services](#). Please share it widely with your networks! The brief summarizes current knowledge of the needs, priorities, and equity considerations that shape Indigenous early child development. Data on key indicators of child well-being, as well as family, program, and community context, are shared from surveys of children and families participating in Head Start, home visiting, and childcare programs. It also shares work from the TRC and our partners.



Chelsea Wesner collaborated with Drs. Deana Around Him and Michelle Sarche to develop and disseminate the brief as part of her Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) practicum, making this an opportunity to both disseminate the TRC's work and grow the field of early childhood research. Congratulations, Chelsea, on the release of this important brief and the completion of your DrPH practicum!

The brief draws on three webinars from the [ACF Tribal Early Childhood Development Series](#). Findings from the full webinar series are summarized in an ACF brief that was also released in November titled [Innovations in Tribal Early Childhood Programs: Findings from a Webinar Series with Practitioners, Researchers, and Policy Makers](#).

### Upcoming Events & Activities



There are several upcoming conferences and events that we will present at, attend, or lead in future months. Please consider submitting your work, looking for our team members if you attend, and helping us share the news about these gatherings!

- [Society for Research in Child Development](#), March 23-25, 2023, in-person at Salt Lake City, UT. Consider joining the *new* SRCD [Indigenous Caucus!](#)
- [Society for Prevention Research](#), May 30-June 2, 2023, in-person at Washington, DC
- TRC and Johns Hopkins Center for Indigenous Health (JHCIH) Summer Institute, tentatively July 17-21, virtual with more information forthcoming! To learn more about the JHCIH institute course offerings and certificate program, see [here](#).
- [Native Children's Research Exchange Conference](#), September 14-15, 2023, in-person at Denver, CO



## TRC Steering Committee Meetings

Thank you to everyone who was able to join us either in-person or virtually for our TRC Steering Committee meeting held on September 14, 2022! We had a day full of updates, laughs, and thought-provoking discussions to advance our work. We also had strong TRC representation in the subsequent [Native Children's Research Exchange](#) (NCRE) conference, which included posters and presentations from the TRC network and scholars, as well as the first Early Career Scholars Roundtable focused on pathways outside of academia (below left) and Inaugural Robert N. Emde Memorial Plenary, featuring TRC Steering Committee member Lisa Martin (below right).

We will be in touch early next year to schedule our next TRC Steering Committee meeting, which will be held virtually. Please note that we plan to hold an in-person TRC Steering Committee meeting on September 13, 2023, in conjunction with the 2023 NCRE conference (details forthcoming). Please email Michelle Sarche ([michelle.sarche@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:michelle.sarche@cuanschutz.edu)) with questions!



## Learn with Us

Two items that recently made their way onto our reading list that may also be of interest to you are:

- On November 9, the Supreme Court of the United States heard oral arguments in a case that challenges the constitutionality of the Indian Child Welfare Act. The Washington Post shared [In Arizona, small tribe watches warily as Supreme Court takes up Native adoption law](#), highlighting the importance of the case.
- ACF hosted a [Tribal Early Childhood Webinar Series event in celebration of Native American Heritage Month](#), featuring producers and advisors for the PBS Kids show *Molly of Denali*. View the recording for a moving discussion of the importance of representation in early childhood programming.

## Stay in Touch



Like us on Facebook: [@TribalEarlyChildhoodResearchCenter](#)



Follow us on Twitter: [@TheTRC](#)



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.*