

Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children

October 7, 2020

Virtual Panel by Webinar: Public Hearing of the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children at the 2020 National Indian Education Association Convention and Trade Show

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Commissioners Present:

Chair Gloria O’Neill, Dr. Dolores Subia BigFoot, Melody Staebner, Anita Fineday, Elizabeth Morris, Dr. Leander R. McDonald, and Don Gray.

Commissioner Absent:

Vice-Chair Dr. Tami DeCoteau, Jesse Delmar and Carlyle Begay.

Detailees, Staff, and Contractor:

Moushumi Beltangady, Department of Health and Human Services
Ronald Lessard, Department of Education
Regina Gilbert, Department of the Interior
Lisa Rieger, Cook Inlet Tribal Council
Joshua Franks, Cook Inlet Tribal Council
Miriam Jorgensen, Native Nations Institute of the University of Arizona
Danielle Hiraldo, Native Nations Institute of the University of Arizona

[Transcript]

Chair O’Neill Good day, everyone. My name is Gloria and I serve as Chair of the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children. We are really excited to host today, this conversation with all of you in the community who have taken up the priority and role of educating our children. Before we get started, I want to introduce to you today our fellow Commissioners: Ms. Melody Staebner, Ms. Anita Fineday, and Dr. McDonald.

We want to thank the National Indian Education Association, particularly Diana Cournoyer and her staff, for making this public hearing possible. This virtual meeting is a huge undertaking and we so appreciate you taking the time to host us and support the logistics for the event.

Before we begin, I’d like to tell you a little bit about the Commission. We are an 11-member Commission established by Congress to conduct a comprehensive study of all issues affecting American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children from ages 0 to 24. The bill that created us was co-sponsored by former Senator Heidi Heitkamp from North Dakota and Senator Lisa Murkowski from Alaska.

We know that Native children and youth experience severe health and socioeconomic disparities compared to other racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. Though the federal government has a trust responsibility to provide for the education, health, and safety of Native children, complex program requirements

and limited resources have not been successful at addressing these disparities. And many times, federal agencies too often lack clear guidance and operate in an uncoordinated way, inhibiting the ability to effectively address the needs of Native children.

We were created to address the challenges and build on the strengths to find creative ways to change the trajectory of all Native children for the better.

We'll be looking at all issues affecting Native children and youth, including health, mental health, education, early childhood development, child welfare, and juvenile justice. We'll be looking at data and research, identifying best practices and models of collaboration, and hearing directly from Native children, communities, leaders, and other experts about how to better support our children. We'll be thinking about the issues facing all Native children, living in diverse urban, rural, and reservation communities, and in families of all racial and cultural backgrounds.

Once we've completed our study, we will issue a report with our recommendations on how to move the needle on outcomes of Native children in a positive direction. We know that this will take action at the federal level as well as at the state, local, and tribal levels. Our recommendations will focus on better use of existing resources, improved coordination, more accurate data and measures, stronger public-private partnerships, and implementation of best practices.

As part of our comprehensive study, we will hear from Native children, parents, elders, tribal leaders, and other community members at this hearing. We'll also be hearing from respected researchers, program administrators, and other experts who will help us better understand the strengths and needs of Native children in this region, and ways to better support them. This is really exciting because it's the first time we are holding an open public hearing, since we had to cancel our first planned hearing in March in Phoenix due to COVID-19. We are excited to hear from you today. Thank you for being willing to take time out of the busy NIEA meeting schedule to participate in this hearing.

At today's session we will invite you to come up to the virtual microphone and share about three minutes of testimony on any issue related to health, education, and the well-being of Native children. If you are interested in providing testimony, please type your name into the chat box. We're hoping to hear from about 15 individuals during the session today. Thank you in advance for being willing to share your expertise and your stories. If we're not able to get to everyone, we apologize in advance and ask you to submit written testimony to us at our email address at asbwsnc@gmail.com. This email address is also listed in the chat.

I want to just pause for a moment and note that when each speaker is invited to speak, Mo [Moushumi Beltangady] will choose the attendee from the list and let them know that you can begin your testimony. We will give you three minutes to speak. Then I will let you know when you come to the end of your time. So I'm not being disrespectful or rude, but we want to make sure that we hear from as many people as we can. So once your three minutes is up, I will let you know.

I just want to again thank you for your time. Thank you to Diana, thank you to NIEA, and we really look forward to hearing from you today. Oh yes, and before we get started, I thank you Dr. McDonald, would you please begin us with a prayer.

Commissioner McDonald [Prayer in Native language.] We come before you and thanks to him for this day and thanks you for the many blessings. We thank you for bringing us together to hear testimony from our relatives throughout Indian country. We pray that you put a blessing on all of us that our ears and our hearts and our minds would be open to whatever you have for us today. A blessing be upon those that are listening and those who are providing testimony that we might move forward in regard to the protection of our children. Thank you for being there and thank you for making our way for us in this good work. [Native language] and all my relatives.

Moushumi Beltangady Sue, so could you move Judy Francis up so she can speak. She's our first witness.

Sue Go ahead, Judy.

Moushumi Beltangady You're currently on mute, if you're trying to speak.

Sue I'm trying to unmute Judy but she needs to accept. She's not responding.

Chair O'Neill Sue maybe we can move to the next speaker, and then we can move back to Judy.

Moushumi Beltangady We don't have anybody else currently, who has written into the chat that they are interested in speaking. So just a reminder again if you're interested in speaking, please type into the chat. We have about 80 attendees so I'm hopeful that someone is interested in providing that perspective.

Chair O'Neill Sue.

Sue Yep.

Chair O'Neill Have you heard back from Judy?

Sue I haven't, and I've been, I texted her as well or chatted with her as well, have not heard. I can promote her to panelist, and she could speak that way, just in case there's an issue.

Chair O'Neill Yes. Why don't we try that?

Diana Cournoyer Mo, this is Diana there are two other people that have put their name in the chat.

Moushumi Beltangady Yes, I was just, thank you, I was just about to. We have, while we're waiting for Judy to unmute, we have Lavidia Maestas. Hopefully I didn't pronounce that wrong, Sue if you could allow her to speak.

Sue Okay go ahead Lavida.

Lavida Maestas In my area it's good afternoon so I'll say good afternoon, and thank you for allowing me to speak. I just, I just wanted to indicate that I primarily serve a population as a school board with a residential program in Arizona that's a border town program. And I just want to reiterate that it's very important that we also not leave those residential programs that are off the reservations out of being a part of advocating heavily for them and including them in various initiatives that are going out. Because you know those students that attend these residential programs that are off the reservations, and they feed into the public schools, is quite unique in the means of, you know, that was either their only means of receiving education, or there was a choice for them to be able to experience and receive an education that was off the reservation. So I'd just like to share that and ask that they also play a big part in the initiative. Thank you.

Moushumi Beltangady Thank you, Lavida. Commissioners, do you have any questions you'd like to ask of Ms. Maestas?

Chair O'Neill Thank you for your comments Lavida, I really appreciate the testimony. And again would love to hear from our Commissioners who just joined. We have Dr. BigFoot and Commissioner Don Gray. Do you have any additional thoughts or questions for Lavida? Let's move to the next speaker please.

Sue Kirsten. Go ahead, Kirsten.

Kirsten Mathos [Introduction in the Navajo language.] Good morning, my name is Kirsten Mathos, I was raised on the Navajo Nation, and I was an elementary teacher for nine years, four years of which I taught on the Tohono O'odham reservation in Arizona. And if there's one thing that resonates with my experience is, the critical need for trauma informed care within academic institutions. Especially institutions that are serving indigenous populations. At the elementary school I was teaching at, we didn't have a licensed practicing counselor. We did have a behavior interventionist, but we did not have a counselor. There was a critical need for mental health supports within the school system. And I think that moving forward if we could advocate for more funding in regards to those mental health supports within academic institutions. So that would look like funding for social and emotional curriculum, funding for more therapists, funding for more guidance counselors. I think ultimately we will see growth, both within our student population socially, emotionally, and academically. As an elementary teacher, oftentimes I found myself trying to take on many of these roles. I assisted my students as best as I could to heal from some of the traumas they experienced while at the same time being held accountable for my students to produce high academic achievement. And it's really just not feasible, without having a larger network of support. Currently I am in grad school, at San Diego State University, they have a program tailored towards Native students for school psychology, so I'm hoping that at the completion of my degree I can be a larger advocate for large scale, academic institutional change. But just as a teacher, it was really tough to try and fill some of those holes in the hearts of our kiddos

with love and compassion, and then at the same time, teach them how to read, teach them basic math skills and foundations, make sure that they have food to take home, make sure that they're on a bus that has A/C or has heat, and that they're coming to school with, you know, resources that they can use just to have a healthy start to the day. I know that I spent a lot of my salary on just trying to provide snacks, healthy snacks for the kids. And we did have some resources where IHS donated like toothbrushes and toothpaste, but you know those programs are not consistent, and I think that in order to ultimately uplift our indigenous youth, we have to really start with some of the basic foundational needs and then moving into the next year of mental health and emotional support. And then we will ultimately see the rewards of this in academic results. That's all I have to share today. Thank you.

Chair O'Neill Thank you. Are there any questions or comments from the Commissioners for Kirsten? So Dr. BigFoot says, I agree that more trauma informed care is important and tribal communities can draw on their teachings of being a good relative and can support trauma informed care approaches.

Other questions or comments?

So congratulations Kirsten for furthering your education around this. I agree that with the research over the last decade or so, when you have an integrated and comprehensive approach to education and well-being that really helps support the brain development, and the growth of a child. And my question is to you, are there some best practice models that you can point us to as a Commission that we should look a little further into as we, you know, determine what is best as it relates to models that work well and that we can cite within our report.

Kirsten Mathos Recently, one of my class assignments had us undergo some training in a Bounce Back Program, which is completely free. And we partnered with a professor from an indigenous professor from, gosh, I want to say it was in North Dakota or Montana. I can look up that information. But with the Bounce Back Program, she assisted us in tailoring it to indigenous children and indigenous youth. So, that would be, I guess, a good starting place. At the university I'm currently attending at San Diego State University, some of my cohort members in years prior to me have assembled Resilience Based Curriculum. And I'm not totally sure if that's accessible to the public, I can double check but that would be a great model, I believe for developing social and emotional programs that are tailored to indigenous youth, and really focusing on Native based practices to help heal from some traumatic experiences.

Chair O'Neill Thank you. I see that Dr BigFoot has also made a comment about presenting on trauma informed care to tribal communities. Dr. BigFoot do you have additional comments that you would like to make?

Commissioner BigFoot I was just thinking, you know, we have always had an understanding of being a good relative, taking care of one another, being there for, you know, times of difficulty, and that understanding of generosity and a lot of tribes have generosity as that first pull. That generosity and appreciation and welcoming is what the

foundation is in terms of our indigenous teachings, and that those are also the understandings that we have regarding trauma informed care that we provide the safety, provide the protection, provide the opportunity for healing. And that, you know, we understand how to take care of one another. And because I think the other part of that is because we are a culture of honor, you know, being that honoring one another, you know, having honor songs. You know, acknowledging one another, that honor is an important part of our culture, and that shame has taken over, and that because of shame, we haven't been able to take care of the traumas that have occurred. And so, by looking at this, our teachings that we can bring back along with the science of trauma informed care. A better way of taking care and lessening the effects of a lot of the trauma. And also, eliminating some of the trauma. So we do have trauma informed care, culturally relevant evidence based treatments that are trauma focused, and, you know, it's recognizing that these resources are available. And thank goodness we have a lot of different kinds of resources. And now we just need to be able to figure out how we can utilize them, how we can implement them, how we can get people to, you know, learn more about them in order to implement them. So, you know, fortunate we have a lot of history about being a good relative that hopefully we can move that forward. Thank you.

Chair O'Neill Thank you, Dr. BigFoot. I'd like to move forward with the next. Before we move to the next speaker, Dr. McDonald.

Commissioner McDonald I just wanted to build on what was shared by our speaker, as well as Dr. BigFoot, and just talking about trauma informed care. But also recognize the historical trauma and inter-generational trauma in regard to what occurred to our people, our peoples, and how that oppressive environment has really been a loss of our language and parts of our culture. As a result of the loss of language has really impacted us throughout Indian country. And especially because we're here with the National Indian Education Association, how education plays a role in that work in regard to accurate histories of what transpired since first contact with the Europeans here, within Turtle Island. Thank you.

Chair O'Neill Okay, let's move to the next speaker please.

Sue Okay, and I have Lynnann Yazzie, allow you to speak.

Lynnann Yazzie Hello Yá'át'ééh, can you hear me okay? Hello, can you hear me okay?

Sue Yes we can.

Lynnann Yazzie [Introduction in the Navajo language.] Thank you for allowing me just a couple minutes here. I am the district Native American specialist for Phoenix Union High School District. We are an all High School District located in Phoenix, Arizona. We have about 22 high schools, 11 of those are conventional, your conventional large, you know, high schools. And then we have small specialty schools. And we also have like a Montessori school, we have a gifted Academy, so we have a whole gamut. We have a credit recovery school, so the whole gamut of high schools. And

so, we have about 28,000 students, of which 1,200 to 1,300 are Native American students. We are on the, you know, traditional O’Oodham lands. And so we do border the Gila River Indian Community. And so some of our schools have quite a few students from Gila River, but a majority of our students are Navajo students. We do have representation from over about 50 different tribes in our district. And so just a couple of things that come to mind. You know we talk about the multi-generational households, a lot of our students, you know, are living with their grandparents. Also talking about, you know, transportation issues and concerns, which is interesting because we are in a rural setting. However, we do have that mix with, you know, Gila River, we are bordering Gila River. For example, we've had issues where buses, the later buses, activity buses, aren't, you know, aren't always taking our students onto the reservation, you know, in the evening and at night. So you know transportation issues. Their bus routes start really early in the morning and so since they're the farthest out they get picked up the earliest. I know this even happens, you know, back home, I'm from the Navajo reservation so I know that students would get on the bus, you know so early in the morning and then get home late at night. So, there's a lot of transportation. One of the biggest things that I've seen with our students is, and parents, is self-advocacy. When they are having issues, a lot of times I don't know if they don't know who they can contact or, you know, they don't push the issues and let it make, like let people know, the school know, what their needs are, that they're having difficulty with something. You know in this distance learning virtual format, our district provided hotspots for all of our students and laptops. And that was T-Mobile hotspots. Well, in Gila River we come to find out three weeks into school, that there are no T-Mobile towers in Gila River. And so, we ended up, our program ended up providing Verizon hotspots in order to have our students, you know, in order for them to be able to connect. But we weren't, our program wasn't hearing about that, the school wasn't hearing about that. And so this idea of self-advocacy, you know, gives the district, the schools a misperception that parents and students don't care, that they're lazy, you know, that kind of thing. And so that's where our program, that's where I come in and explain, we're not, you know, traditionally, we don't, speak up, speak out, you know. Respecting the point of views of like our elders, our leaders, and speaking out against that traditionally, is not something that I guess a lot of parents or grandparents do. Yes we do have vocal, you know, parents or grandparents that's great that are advocating on behalf of their kids, but that's not a common thing. I don't know if anybody else sees that, but I think that's where we, as a program, help to support that. And so, I think one of the things that I've seen that's been helpful, I used to work for UNITY, United National Indian Tribal Youth. And, you know, helping youth that youth leadership, you know, developing organizational skills, that youth empowerment, I've seen a huge difference in kind of this next generation I guess, building that confidence, letting them know that that their voice matters. And that, you know, we, as much as we want to think that we know what's best for them, you know we grew up in a completely different world than they're growing up in. So we always have to consider what is important to them, and what their needs are. And so I think that youth voice is very important. So, the academic side of it, I could improve with youth leadership on programming. So I'll just stop there, but thank you very much.

Chair O'Neill Thank you Ms. Yazzie. I'd like to open it up to Commissioners, if you have questions or comments.

I appreciate the comments and again as I asked the earlier speaker, in your work as you look to new models of education and pairing both the educational models with youth leadership, what have you seen that has worked really well as a best practice and where can you direct us to look at some of these best practices.

Lynnann Yazzie Well I think a lot of major organizations have started to move towards having, you know, youth tracks, youth commissions, you know, I know NIEA, NCAI, UNITY, AISES, you know all these major organizations have kind of that youth, youth track, youth opportunity for them to get involved in these organizations. Which is really important because you know eventually they'll be the ones that are going to be, you know, in the, in the positions, in the leadership positions in the organization. So, I think looking at models that help to promote that youth leadership development, that idea of service, community service. And I think for me what I see a lot of times is, with academics, when students are struggling academically, it's because you know we're, I guess traditionally our backgrounds are not, our students don't do, aren't, don't always do well in, you know, Western, westernized education, Western style education. And so I think getting them involved outside the classroom, will help inside of the classroom. Because when we continually keep opportunities from students just because they're failing classes, we're only being, you know we're only the holding them down further. I think that if we find something else that they're interested, whether it's in the arts, whether it's in athletics, whether it's in, you know, cultural, the cultural realm of everything. I think that's where we also need to help to provide those students with opportunities and advocate for that in the Western style of education, kind of indigenizing that style education, you know, equity practices, you know, taking a look at that in districts as well.

Chair O'Neill I see that Commissioner Gray may have a comment or question.

Commissioner Gray Thank you Madam Chair, I do have more of a comment. I absolutely agree with you that I think that some of the common themes that I'm hearing is the need for trauma informed care from a leadership perspective or, a program perspective. But from a youth perspective, the need for a standardized curriculum around self-advocacy and leadership training, and I think that a very large portion of self-advocacy can be captured within leadership training. And leadership training in my mind is more than just teaching the importance of service, and, in my mind, that's teaching children and youth how to connect with other people. And when you teach them how to connect, then that teaches them how to self-advocate. So I very much appreciate your comments around the need for some type of a culturally appropriate leadership training program and self-advocacy, so thank you for that.

Lynnann Yazzie Really quickly, I was just gonna say and I'll put in the comments but just, one of the ways is involvement in youth councils, which is you know, there's different words, or language, you know, different terms, but you know UNITY provides that type of space, I guess for students to get involved as well.

Chair O’Neill	<p>Other comments or questions from Commissioners?</p> <p>We do have a comment from one of our attendees, her name is Tamara Uselman and she says facing history in ourselves embeds social emotional learning in two ways methods processes of learning and facing history. She says, I'm not sure if this has value but it's something I want panelists to know about. I have, she doesn't have a wish to speak but to listen and learn. So thank you for your comments, and I'd like to ask if any Commissioners have a response to that. And, like Commissioner Gray so eloquently stated, I do believe that the, you know, the best investment of opportunity, especially as it relates to the education of our children needs to be holistic, it needs to have who we are at the center of that. And so, I agree with understanding and knowing who we are and where we come from, will only allow us to see the path moving forward. Commissioner Gray.</p>
Commissioner Gray	<p>I would just follow up that I think that facing history and ourselves embeds a social emotional learning into our ways is really insightful. It's hard to take an honest look at our history and to know where we've been, and to evaluate where we need to improve both internally within ourselves, and socially in our history. I appreciate that comment and I thought it was really insightful, so thank you.</p>
Moushumi Beltangady	<p>Madam Chair, we have Evelyn Enos has asked to speak.</p>
Evelyn Enos	<p>[Introduction in Native language.] Good morning, my name is Evelyn Enos. I'm from the Gila River Indian Community in Arizona and I'm attending as a representative for the Akimel O'Oodham/Pipash and Youth Council. Relating to one of the past speakers, I agree with the need for better mental health assistance for the youth because as a current sophomore in high school, attending school off of the reservation, I find it hard to find good counseling for myself within the school system without being told to go to an outside resource. And as for behavioral health services in the community, the promise for confidentiality is hard because, in a small community, word tends to get around. And I hate to say it, but people talk and not that it's bad to normalize mental health problems, but without consent, it's not something I would like.</p>
Chair O’Neill	<p>Thank you, Evelyn. Yes. Are those your comments Evelyn? Do you have any additional comments?</p>
Evelyn Enos	<p>No.</p>
Chair O’Neill	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time and really appreciate what you've said here today and I'd like to open it up to any other Commissioner to respond or have comments.</p>
Commissioner McDonald	<p>Madam Chair, I appreciate the testimony. I come from a small community myself and I know how that is. But I think the other piece of this is that in regard to the work that we're doing here as a Commission, I think it's important that the policies</p>

and laws that are in place need to be enforced in smaller communities. And there needs to be consequences within those communities for those that violate the confidentiality of their students in regard to FERPA, or health or mental health issues in regard to ICWA. So, so I appreciate what Ms. Enos has shared. Thank you.

Chair O'Neill Thank you, and I've made a note that this is something that we will reference in our report as it relates to all of our programs. I think it's absolutely imperative, as Dr. McDonald said in all the work that we do, that we adhere to the confidentiality that bounds us and that we ensure that we create safe space for our students and the people we're working with. So thank you. Any other additional questions or comments?

Commissioner Staebner This is Commissioner Melody Staebner, and I just want to thank you for your comments today, Evelyn. And we know how important it is to address trauma within our schools and I work in a school district myself, and it can be a challenge to meet those basic needs. But we know that those needs have to be met in order for them to learn in school. I hope as a Commissioner, you know, we I know we want to address these kind of issues. So thank you again for your comments today.

Chair O'Neill Thank you. We have a request from one of our attendees. I guess this is from Mo, who says, "We'd be very interested in hearing about how you have been impacted by COVID-19 and ideas you have to address those needs. Please enter your name into the chat if you're interested in speaking." And we have about 14 minutes left so if any of those attendees, it looks like we have about 51. It would be great to hear from any of you who recent as we have experienced COVID in our communities, what's the impact been on education, and some of our students? And if you cannot share your comments today in the webinar we would love to hear from you as well. We do have an email address and we'd love to hear some of your written comments as well, and we do not have a deadline. So if you could submit those to the email we will make sure to review them and really focus on some of the core issues that come out. Again, you can see that our email address is asbwsnc@gmail.com.

My one of the big areas that I'm very concerned about that we have heard in our community, is the issue of increased suicides, especially as a result, especially as we have been dealing with COVID in the sense of those young people staying home, they don't have their social connections, or their networks. And so I am wondering if any of you have had those same experiences in your communities, if you're seeing trends, if you're seeing increased numbers in young people who are experiencing mental illness or suicides.

Moushumi Beltangady Sue, were you able to resolve the mute issue with Judy Francis?

Sue Let me try again.

Chair O'Neill And Mo?

Moushumi Beltangady Yes.

Chair O'Neill In response to the comment that I just made, what have you been hearing out of HHS, as a result, as it relates to potentially the increase in mental health issues within our communities. And in particular, issues that are directly impacting youth.

Moushumi Beltangady I know that suicide prevention is an important focus of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration within HHS (SAMHSA). And that they provide a lot of funds to tribal communities to address this issue. But I also know from hearing from folks in the field that there's a lot of concern about whether these resources are getting to the right communities, and whether there are sufficient resources to fully address the need.

Chair O'Neill At my request would be that we can potentially host a webinar or a virtual hearing around this to bring in some experts to really understand if we've seen an increase in suicides as it relates to the different ways in which our students are not as connected as they were before because of schools having to go online. I'd really like to understand what some of the data and the trends are.

Okay. We have about nine minutes left. And I'm wondering, do we have anyone else in the queue to share comments?

Moushumi Beltangady We don't have anyone else in the queue. We did have Annette Mennem submit a comment and I don't know if she's interested in saying anything to the Commissioners. She says she "provides student support services at a non-tribal institution. We have a Native American Center, it has limited capacity right now. And the Native American club is struggling with hosting events."

Chair O'Neill Well, in the few remaining minutes that we have, I would just like to ask Commissioners if there are particular areas that you would like us to focus on for our next public hearings. As I said, I do think we need to have a hearing around mental health and some of the trends as it relates to COVID-19, and that we do that sooner rather than later. I would open it up to other Commissioners for your thoughts.

Judy Francis Hello. I'm sorry. Okay, hold on, let me...I'm kind of like too hyper. I never did, do a public speaking or anything. But I just wanted to say, I'm a Navajo from Kayenta, Arizona and my name is Judy Francis, and I'm [in Navajo language]. And I interact with Kayenta District Schools as under Johnson O'Malley program, and one of the PAC committee member under Indian Education Committee member on that program as President. I didn't know when I saw that things it says, sign up. I thought you were saying sign up that you're participating in this public hearing. I didn't see the chat until later, or give you three minutes or something. But I just want to say thank you for letting me say something, but I think all you guys are doing a good job putting in all these good comments. And I'm just here to listen and just take some notes, that's what I'm doing. But I just want to say thank you again to everybody that's participating in this program today. I wish we weren't in this pandemic thing,

be in person at the NIEA conference, that's what I'm just thinking now sitting here. But I don't really have anything to share with you but I just want to say you guys are doing a good job and putting in good comments and good words for everything. That's all I need to say, thank you.

Chair O'Neill Thank you, Judy, I really appreciate your comments. I did receive word from one of our Commissioners, Elizabeth Morris. Elizabeth are you online? I think she's been having some difficulty trying to connect and speak. Mr. Don Gray, Commissioner Gray?

Commissioner Gray Thank you, Madam Chair. So, we've heard some testimony and some feedback on a couple of different programs out there. The Youth Mental Health First Aid Program that the BIA has rolled out to a number of their locations, as well as this Bounce Back Program. As a Commission, are we kind of tracking those best practice programs that are identified out there? And as far as setting a future date, are we going to set up a date that we can actually take a deep dive into some of these programs, and see if there's some synergies there or something that the Commission can recommend as a whole?

Chair O'Neill Yes, Commissioner Gray, thank you. I believe it is the intent of the Commission, as we listen to testimony and we hear about best practice programs, that we do take a deep dive into those programs and really understand the models that are working in the communities and that we have that those vetted and reflected in the report as appropriate. So yes, we will, all of our conversations, including our public hearings like this one are recorded. And then we will be working with our TA provider to sort through all the comments. Did you have a response Commissioner Gray?

Commissioner Gray No, thank you.

Chair O'Neill Do any other Commissioners have closing thoughts? Well, as you can see, this was our first big public hearing and, again, we want to thank NIEA for just being such a great partner. Thank you Diana and to you and your team for putting this together. I believe that as we're in this new world and the use of technology that we will get better and better out of it at this. I realized that this, we put this together pretty quickly because we wanted to really take advantage of the opportunity and with the NIEA folks. So thank you for quickly responding. Thank you for all of those who shared your stories with us today. We really appreciate the testimony. We appreciate you as experts in this field and all that you do on behalf of our children every day. And we look forward to hearing a bit more from you in the future as we start our work. So, I wish all of you a wonderful day and want to thank the Commissioners for your time.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]

[Transcript completed in-house by R. Gilbert, Department of the Interior]