

Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children

September 29, 2020

**Virtual Panel by Webinar: 2-Generational and Multi-Generational Approaches
To Supporting Family Economic Self-Sufficiency**

Recording:

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Commissioners Present:

Chair Gloria O’Neill, Vice-Chair Dr. Tami DeCoteau, Dr. Leander R. McDonald, Melody Staebner, Jesse Delmar, Anita Fineday, Elizabeth Morris, Don Gray, and Dr. Dolores Subia BigFoot.

Commissioner Absent:

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

I. Introductions and Welcome

Chair Gloria O’Neill opened the meeting at 3:30 pm ET, 11:30 pm AKT. All Commissioners, detailees, and staff introduced themselves.

II. Overview of Commission and Goals of Meeting

Chair O’Neill welcomed the three experts to provide testimony today.

[Transcript]

Chair O'Neill My name is Gloria O'Neill and I have the privilege and honor to serve as Chair of the Native Commission, and I'm so excited to welcome our experts today. As you know, we decided as a Commission in the light of COVID that we would move forward to continue to do our work to gather information, to talk with experts in our community, to really understand some of the issues that are impacting our communities, especially our children, and to really talk with the experts and going deep and understanding the issues as our charge is to focus on the health and well-being of our children.

And so with that, I would like to introduce to you the first presenter, but before I do so just remind our presenters, that you will have 15 minutes to present. I will help close your presentation in 15 minutes and I do that very respectfully. And I know Mo is going to make sure that we all keep on time in the chat box she'll give you a reminder 10 minutes. And I want to ensure that we leave ample time, so that the Commissioners can engage with you and ask questions. So we have three presenters today. Ms. Holly Morales of Cook Inlet Tribal Council. I'm very excited to hear your presentation, Holly, and hear what you have to say, and you've done just incredible work on behalf of our community for so many years. Secondly, we have Barb Fabre, and rounding it off, we have Kara Bobroff. So really excited to hear from all three of you, Ms. Holly, why don't you get us started?

III. Panelist: Holly Morales, Cook Inlet Tribal Council

Holly Morales Wonderful. Good afternoon. Let me pull up my presentation. Can you see that? Wonderful. I'm honored to be here on behalf of Cook Inlet Tribal Council, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony for the Commission on Native Children. My name is Holly Morales, I'm the daughter of Benedict and Mary Snowball. My father's Yupik village where I'm an enrolled member is Seventh Community Association. It's a small village of about 700 people and accessible only by boat and plane. My mother is originally from Boston, Massachusetts. I'm married to a wonderful man named Raymond, I have five beautiful children. We're a blended family. My husband is descendant of the CIRI Corporation and then I am from the Bering Straits Region. Our children are blessed with cultures from the Yupik, Athabaskan, Navajo, Mexican, and Caucasian. I share this because our family is very similar to the many diverse families in the Cook Inlet region where I reside and work. I have worked for CITC for 23 years, and I'm proud to support its mission to work in partnership with our people who develop our endless potential.

CITC's programs serve the Cook Inlet region with an American Indian/Alaskan Native population of more than 60,000, or roughly 40% of the total Native American population in Alaska. In Anchorage alone, the Native population is almost 40,000. Currently, CITC provides services to its participants via five core departments. There's Alaska's People, Child and Family Services, Employment and Training Services Department, Recovery Services, and Youth Empowerment. The Alaska's People and ETSD departments both connect participants with employment, training, and

education opportunities, while each SD also provides participants with temporary funding, like Tribal TANF, general assistance, and supportive services. The Child and Family Services Department delivers trauma-informed services that stabilize, preserve, and reunify participating families. The Recovery Services Department operates a variety of programs and facilities that provide adult and youth participants with outpatient and residential substance use disorder treatment services. The YES Department delivers in-school and after-school educational programs designed to enrich youth participants' academic cultural values, traditional knowledge, family involvement, and positive development. Additionally, two CITC affiliates contribute significantly to our mission, with services including Early Head Start, called the Clare Swan Early Learning Center, and legal advocacy and case management for victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking. We call that the Alaska Native Justice Center. As is evident from the above, CITC's whole- person, whole family approach has its foundation and success in the multi-generation nature of our Native communities. I want to just show you this slide. Unfortunately I won't have time to go over all of the details.

CITC's multi-generation approach common intake. Participants meet with our intake to identify immediate needs and services available for the entire family. Many families are not aware of all the services that we provide. And this eliminates families applying for the wrong services. It also allows us to ask them about their entire family and tell them about services for everyone, especially their children. We want to ensure that we are reaching more than the person walking in the door, we want to serve their entire family. With the Tribal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, we have job coaches, intensive case managers, and youth case managers. We service the entire family. We place emphasis on success of both the parents and the children. We care about how the children are progressing, we ask about their progress. We look at all aspects of the needs of the family from helping the mom and dad with job searching, to buying beds for children to have a safe sleep, to ensuring that they have desks to do online schooling due to COVID. Our Early Head Start and childcare partnership program, they train Tribal TANF parents to earn CDAs (Child Development Associate) to work in childcare centers. Clare Swan worked in partnership with TANF to identify families that could benefit from this training, which was designed for participants to earn a wage, while receiving training towards their CDA. Most of these parents had children that were attending the Clare Swan center so not only were they teaching parents how to gain a valuable credential, they were teaching them the importance of early education, and how it will have a lifelong impact on their babies. Parents as educators and our YES Department, we enroll parents that have children in the Anchorage School District and we provide them with stipends to teach them what it takes to provide education in the school district, so they can feel more comfortable with the schools and be involved in their children's education. One of the challenges that our parents face, especially those coming in from rural areas, is a transition to our large schools. In addition, they are provided Microsoft programs training, fabrication curriculum, culturally relevant curriculum, and activities. The results include increased school attendance of their children, test scores are increasing and decreased dropout rates in middle and high

school. Our long-term goal, of course for the children, is to increase career pathways that include post-secondary education.

Community partnership. CITC has begun an effort to create opportunities by developing collective impact models in both education and workforce development. In order to create opportunities for our participants, we have to be part of a larger movement, and participate in statewide conversations. Connections that we have with partners for serving participants are critical in order to move our families forward. CITC realizes children are better off when their families are better off.

Tribal partnerships. It's important that tribes take the initiative to create partnerships in both Indian country and non-Native arenas. There are many urban and rural tribes that could benefit from partnering with community organizations and States. Service providers may not know much about tribal organizations and nations, but we would encourage non-tribal organizations to reach out to tribes to partner in their community. Tribes are open to collaboration and to ensure that they are creating the best opportunities for their members. CITC is not a research organization. CITC, however, is deeply data-driven and committed to program design based on expert evaluation, meaning that we rely heavily on the expertise of our participants to shape, refine, and reshape initiatives, in addition to academic and technical assistance. We're grounded in data. We have to come to understand that nationally recognized evidence-based practices are not necessarily based on the evidence we see in our data. Our practice informs our evidence. We are committed to honor and use the expertise of our participants, not only in program planning, but also in respecting their own definition of success based on their values.

Five Factors is a participant assessment and case management tool that defines, tracks, and measures participants' movement towards their own definition to success and help CITC determine the most effective way to unite the efforts of its service departments to meet the needs of participants. The Five Factors are financial stability, education and training, cultural and spiritual wellness, healthy lifestyles, and relationships. CITC is developing the tool using extensive participant input, literature reviews, board discussions and feedback from various partners including the Aspen Institute. Five Factors is entirely dependent on the voices and perspectives of CITC participants, particularly those that are parents, for information about our service population. CITC will be implementing Five Factors across our organization and we'll use the data to help program development. We understand that our participants live in families of many sorts. We learned from Aspen about Two-Gen models, and paved our way to our own Multi-Gen approach. When we first began this journey to figure out what does move a family forward, the literature review exclusively centered around self-sufficiency. In time and an ongoing process of discovery, it became clear that while self-sufficiency is indeed an important value among our participants, values of independence are generally trumped by interdependence. Our people prize community over wealth, and find success in the intersection of the five domains of their choosing. As our board of directors pointed out in a recent resolution, participants cannot succeed in any one domain without working in all of them.

The Indian Employment and Training Related Services Consolidation Act of 2017 is one of the greatest tools for tribes and tribal organizations to provide holistic, multi-generation approach to workforce development and supportive services. There's one plan, one budget, and one report. Over several decades, CITC and tribal partners across the country have refined their ability to provide holistic one- person one-family approaches to workforce development and supportive services. 477 allows tribes and tribal organizations to consolidate federal funds into one budget, provide one consolidated plan and provide one annual report. In 2017, with the passing of Public Law 115-93 as amended, this successfully changed policy to add eight additional federal departments to the programs eligible for inclusion in their consolidated plan, directly shaping federal policies to reduce barriers, expand data sharing systems, and improve employment options for all tribal organizations and governments. 477 has served as a critical springboard towards tribal innovation and to address challenges and priorities. The Act enables tribal nations and Native organizations, at their own discretion, to consolidate workforce development and related programs across federal departments into a single plan approved by Secretary of the Interior to create customized comprehensive approaches capable of addressing their particular workforce development challenges and priorities. To date, more than 250 tribal nations and Native organizations have merged multiple programs into one 477 plan. The evidence clearly shows that 477 is working. It has allowed participating tribal nations and native organizations to streamline service delivery, eliminate programmatic redundancies and reduce administrative costs, thereby enabling them to more efficiently provide a greater level and quality of direct services to the population they serve. Most importantly, it has reduced regulatory burdens that impede individual success. The 477 program is a model program for tribal communities across the nation, especially in the current climate of needing to do more with less. It provides increased accountability and integration of services, the maximum employment and training assistance reaching tribal participants. Funding for 477 plans is transferred into participating tribes and organizations through contracts and compacts under ISDEAA. This transfer mechanism is an essential element of success for the program, and has provided recipients with the maximum flexibility to achieve maximum efficiency through leveraging match dollars. Secondly, these efficiencies allow more participants to be served per program dollar and permitted innovative new program initiatives to better serve participants. 477 provides a model for what the administration has been promoting in terms of inter- and intra-agency cooperation, elimination of duplication, enhanced service delivery, as well as tribal self-determination. Supervision of tribal TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), CCDF (Child Care and Development Fund) and NEW (Native Employment Works) programs to the 477 program has resulted in increased accountability and success of those programs. Tribal TANF programs like CITC's under 477 has not had the same accountability issues as non 477 tribal TANF tribes and the 477 program received the highest OMB PART (Program Assessment Rating Tool) rating in Indian Affairs. 477 is a model for programs related to Native children. Early Childhood cooperation across IV-B, childcare and Head Start produces coordinated response; we should be working holistically and not in silos. Education programming and TANF support lead to

successful graduation rates and participation. It is a no brainer and that the more you wrap participants with a blanket of support, as one of our parents have said, the more success you will see. Workforce development and career pathways for youth lead to self-determination, providing workforce development, and employability and life skills to youth. We provide close to 100 Youth interns employment opportunities along with the employability skills.

In closing, CITC recommendations. Create mechanisms for tribes and tribal organizations to consolidate funding across departments to better serve Alaska Native and American Indian children, youth and families to eliminate duplication and enhance service delivery. Focus definitions at the local level to better align multi-generation approaches to services and programs, and apply practice- informed evidence to better incorporate Alaska Native and American Indian values and success into program design and delivery. Systematic coordinated approaches lead to better results. Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments on behalf of Native children and the youth that we serve.

Chair O'Neill Thank you, Holly. It was great timing as well. So I'm going to ask if there are any questions for Holly on her presentation, Commissioners. I know that was a lot of information to throw at all of you at one time. But one of the things that I really appreciate about Holly's vision and leadership is how she's been able to take many different funding streams and integrate them to think about the whole family and to think about the family unit. And as we work with family units to give them the opportunities that they need, so that they can participate in their own lives and make their own choices about career pathways and education for their children. So I'm sure Holly, if you want to talk a little bit about just some of the stats of how many hundreds of families every year do you transition from the welfare rolls into self-sufficiency and just give us a story or two of what you've seen as it relates to families as they have those self-sufficiency opportunities.

Holly Morales Right. So typically, we connect families with about 800 per year to employment, and almost half of those are moving on cash assistance to employment. You know the way that we're able to use and maximize 477, we can focus on the whole family, we're not having to worry about, you know, what application is from what program, we have one application for all of our services. So we're able to immediately start helping when we add new programs, it's a matter of using the same application. And so families just feel a lot tremendous relief, that they're not feeling like that we're just having them fill out paperwork. We're actually there serving them -- talking to them immediately. Our family, we provide, like I said, the youth services, which is holistically with the family. And so we can immediately look at grades, give youth incentives, connect them to employment, have a case manager. So recently, during COVID our wraparound services we you know, unfortunately had some members get COVID. So we're able to do grocery delivery services. We can help support their children through schooling through tutoring. It just creates a lot of opportunities to be flexible and move the resources where the family needs are.

- Chair O'Neill Great. Thank you, Holly. So that you have your presentation available and we can make it available the structure that we've been able to implement to serve the thousands of families that you serve every year. I would just like to ask Commissioners -- Holly has a minute or two, any last questions?
- Commissioner BigFoot Yes, Holly, this is -- I'm having trouble with my video and I can't figure out how to make this WebEx work. But thank you very much. Commissioner O'Neill, I hope that I'm not interrupting too much, but, Holly how did I put it in the chat? How did you or whoever have the vision for this? How did leadership come together? What are the methods that you had to go through in order to get to this point? And what were some of the barriers that you thought were in place that leadership worked through? What, how did this vision come to, you know, be an actual, you know, practice? Thank you.
- Holly Morales I think I heard most of it. It was cutting out just a little bit. But, you know, we've been working at this for 20 years, we've been in growth in 477. And I would say that, across all the departments, we really worked towards this common goal. With the support of our administration, we had gotten a grant many years back called Agency Without Walls. And it was a grant that really focused on how can we, as an organization, all the different departments involved in figuring out how we hadn't removed all of those silos between the different departments. And I would also say that our Board of Directors also encourages the cross department collaboration. So it really comes from every layer of our organization where we believe in making sure that those barriers are removed, the silos are removed, that we all have a common purpose. Was it painful at times? Absolutely. I think that we can always learn and I and I'm glad to say that we're starting to have a lot more participant voice in the room. And so that's going to be our next step of how we move forward is making sure that not only are we providing a really great program, participants are helping to shape what that looks like. That's the very exciting piece.
- Chair O'Neill And the only, thank you Holly, the only other thing I'd add Dr. BigFoot, is that as Holly said, our board is extremely visionary and where we can we take up the tools that we think best serve our community. And we believe CITC has long been a proponent and supporter of 477, just because of the effectiveness of removing bureaucracy and making a huge impact in the community. And it allows us, as Holly said, to integrate our programs in such a way that looks at the whole person in the whole family. And so we're hopeful that, you know, more and more of the consolidated 477 program is used across Indian country, I want to say over probably there are over 200 plus plans within Indian country now with the 500 tribes. So, we do a lot of work at the federal level to push forward the law of 477. As you can imagine, there's a lot of pushback, because some folks really believe that they lose control when they don't. So, you know, we will continue to use this tool to serve our families. And as Holly said that it has worked really well to bring their voice into the program. We can, through Holly's leadership and through CITC, we can make available our comprehensive program and structure.

Commissioner McDonald Madam Chair.

Chair O'Neill Yes.

Commissioner McDonald My question is similar to Dee so I think that was covered there. But Anita had a question in the chat that I had that made me curious too.

Chair O'Neill Oh, are there any improvements to the 477 program that you would recommend? We led efforts over a decade to finally take the 477 program from a demonstration approach in Congress to one that was one of the first pieces of legislation that President Trump signed and that is to expand 477 beyond the four initial departments within the federal government so that we could really think about that comprehensive approach to consolidation of employment and training and other related programs. So I do think that as tribes move forward and we negotiate with the Federal Government to integrate more of those programs that we just really need to stand united on ensuring that our federal partners understand the importance of this program and that they allow for the integration that the law allows for. So, you know, no surprise to many of us that have done this work for a lot of years. A big part of it is educating our federal partners and really ensuring that they respect the spirit and extent of the law. And the other piece internally, it's just people it's not program speak, you know, where people take ownership, as Holly said, it's really about an integrated, holistic approach. So I would say on an internal basis is we just have to always remind people they know you don't own these programs, this is really an approach to support our families. Thank you, Holly.

IV. Barb Fabre, Indigenous Visioning

Chair O'Neill Great. All right. Let's move on and our second presenter is Barb Fabre. And Barb. Oh, this is really exciting. She comes to us from Indigenous Visioning. Barb, do you want to give us a little bit more background?

Barb Fabre Boozhoo. Sure, can everybody hear me okay?

Chair O'Neill Yes.

Barb Fabre Thank you. So, I know a bio was submitted as well as written testimony. And just a little bit background, I am an Ojibwe member and from White Earth, Minnesota, the same tribe as Anita Fineday. And we've worked together on many, many different projects. And I left the tribe after 30 years and started my own Indigenous Visioning Company to work with tribes and within tribal communities. And it's been very successful. And I'm learning a lot so and really appreciate Holly and her presentation. And it's gonna be hard to follow up with that. But I will try. One of the first things I do -- and I've worked with parents, teenagers, foster parents, childcare providers, leaders -- I always start with the brain research and development. It's easy to tell parents what they should be doing. But it's better to empower parents with information, as well as policymakers, and brain development has really changed my

life and my career. And which, Anita was there, when we started the brain development conference on our reservation that brought in local national experts. And we would get anywhere from 700 to 1,000 people come to our rural reservation, both tribal and non-tribal. So brain research and development really, I think catapulted the need, that we need to make change in the environment, relationships for children, and health and safety, and food insecurity, housing, that all matters, and it can all be connected to brain research and development.

And I'm going to ask Moushumi to go to the next slide. And I apologize, I'm having some technical difficulties. And I think it's the one before that. Is that the next one? OK, thank you. No the one before that, the brain. But I can start there. Yes. Was that the first slide? Yes, yes.

Moushumi
Beltangady

Sorry. That was the first. Yep.

Barb Fabre

Oh, okay. So then yes, go to the achievement gap. So one of the things I always share, and I shared it with a lot of my leaders, is we talk about the achievement gap. Again, when I visit with parents and leaders, policy makers, I always talk about the issues that face Indian country. One of the biggest issues is the achievement gap. And Dr. Todd Risley, and I'm not going to go over all this because I know you're all really super smart people and you could probably teach this. But I think the achievement gap, when I would do MFIP (Minnesota Family Investment Program) orientations or TANF orientations with parents, I would always use information like this. That children coming from middle and high-income families arrived at kindergarten with the 20,000 word vocabulary. But yet children from communities of color and poverty arrived with a three to 4,000 word vocabulary. And that resonates with them. And they want their child to arrive with a 20,000 words vocabulary. So I think empowering parents and policymakers with this information, before you do an ask, is always critical and I have done that pretty much my whole career. Next slide, please.

Part of that research is also on the adverse childhood experiences. And again, I'm not going to go over this. But something that we really need to share and empower our parents with. We know that historical trauma has put us in the situation that we are that are, you know, three generations, four generations ago went through, and we're experiencing that today. And I make it a point, in my career and everything that I do, is that we are going to turn the adverse childhood experience into positive childhood experiences. And we need to start that so that the three, four generations down the road, they don't, they're not feeling the historical trauma. So I always stress that as well. And if we're talking about working with two generations, three generations of families, and we want to see change in seven generations, we have to know where we came from. An elder of mine always told me that if you want to know where you're going, you have to know where you came from. And the same concept is with this research. Next slide, please.

And again, we know the research on epigenetics and what that's done to our people. And that parents don't understand why they do not like educational systems, why they do not trust educational systems, the government. So it's just kind of relearning that, but then also providing them with things to build on. So next slide, please.

And we have, again, a lot of research out there that can back this. And I know that, you know, we don't want to bombard our parents with this information, but we need to empower them with information. And we know that servicing the whole family in the 2-Gen approach has been effective. That's how, you know, that's part of our life. That's part of our ancestors' life. And so it wasn't until the government and school boards or boarding schools interrupted that. So we have to relearn it. And a lot of the 2-Gen services out there, such as TELI are the Tribal Early Learning Initiative. A lot of the MIECHV the home visiting where you're servicing the child and the parents and providing resources and services and referrals. All of that really supports the research and what we're trying to do for children and families. Next slide, please.

As Indigenous Visioning grew, one of the first things we had the opportunity to do was do a tribal tour of the tribes in Minnesota. And we brought partners with us to hopefully be the partners who understand what Indian Country looks like. And, then also to develop relationships and potential opportunities for partnership. We visited all the tribes and visited the tribal leaders and their early childhood program directors and the information was just wonderful -- what we got -- what we learned. With many of the tribal leaders you know, they express how proud they are of their tribal communities and their programs. And a lot of what they talked about was the 2-Gen services and the 2-Gen approach. And they talked about how tribes, you know, just give us the money, and we'll figure it out. And that's kind of the message that came across loud and strong amongst all the tribes, is they know their communities best. They know how to serve their families, and then they the importance of culture and tradition, incorporated and immersed in those services, is exactly what pretty much everyone that said, So next slide.

And I'm not covering everything that I wrote in written and I would love to take questions on my written testimony, I'm saying, I just want to kind of give you a summary of some of the things that I did not cover in my written testimony. I was involved with the state of Minnesota when they start talking about reforming their early childhood systems reform and 2-Gen was exactly what we were going for. We had stakeholders at the table from early childhood, housing, employment and training, homelessness, health, and education. So we have all those partners at the table and we envision what would it look like for a family to have services for the whole family, a holistic approach. And so it was the year-long committee work with a lot of blood, sweat, and tears literally. And the end result is this early childhood systems reform that can be found in the state of Minnesota website, and I'm happy to share that. But we really felt strongly that the end result and report really helped us with understanding what families need. We can service, early childhood, service the child, but if the child's parents are experiencing any kind of substance abuse, or maybe they're homeless, or unemployed, and it's, you know, the child is not going to

do well. And so we really want to change that dynamic, we have to serve the whole family. So next slide, please.

So I wanted to just kind of spend more time on the recommendations. And in my written testimony, we talked, I talked about TELI, which is the Tribal Early Learning Initiative and while our programs work together, it wasn't until TELI came into our tribe that we really get the three programs of childcare, Head Start, Early Head Start, and tribal home visiting, to sit down and look at it from a parent's perspective, reduce paperwork, reduce them going to three different doors, for screening, for eligibility, anything like that. And so that really gave us a taste of what 2-Gen is and a holistic approach. And from that, because that was so successful, we were able to incorporate WECARE, which is the White Earth Collaboration, Assessment, Resources and Education. And it's a new case management system. And with that, we start servicing families and we set up similar to 102-477. But without 102-477. That same concept was there. And so we also needed a data system so we were able to incorporate a data system that our tribe owns and maintains and uses. Prior to that we when we needed information on our own tribe, we usually had to go to the state and get that and it was very piecemeal. So our recommendation is definitely do similar to what Holly talked about, and then, or do it outside of 102-477 and do something similar. It's just getting partners around the table. And one of the biggest things was security, of course, and confidentiality. But those things, you know, we were able to overcome those and find out that we really could work within each other's parameters. I recently learned of this, I recently learned of this new bill, Senator Tester, while it's not a new bill it was 2015, but that I don't think it went anywhere, but that has so much potential. You know, be similar to what Holly presented in the WECARE. So I'd really like to see where that is, and where, if that's something that could be used or pushed for future for tribes. The 2-Gen initiatives should also include strong professional development, for tribes to grow their own. And it kind of goes back to servicing that whole family do not have, do not have resources to maybe get their degree, maybe they don't have a driver's license, maybe their funding, their financials just don't allow them. That's where 2-Gen and holistic approaches really come in handy for that family, it means the world to them. And we were able to witness that, and when we did the tribal tour, that is exactly what the tribal leaders talked to us about is, we need to grow our own. And, you know, we need tribal colleges, to work with tribal colleges. Because the workforce, all of them had so many issues with staff retention, out there, childcare would get, you know, work with their aides and teachers to get their degrees. And then another agency, because they have their degree would offer them more funding. So my time is up, it looks like I get about five minutes, I'm going to close up real quick and I know you can read these and you'll get these. So these are just some of my recommendations. Go to the next slide.

I think, to echo Holly, it's just to allow tribes to work within their parameters, but then also to be flexible and to have the tribe, any of the Federal, any federal language to tribes to encourage a collaboration in 2-Gen in the holistic approach it helps when families, or it helps when federal staff are saying that, state staff, and it just supports it on a local level. Miigwech. Thank you for allowing me to present.

Chair O'Neill Thank you, Barb. That was wonderful. Really appreciate the presentation. I know there's some questions that we have in the chat, wondering if Anita, do you have a question that you'd like to ask?

Commissioner Fineday Yes, thank you. I just got a quick look at that last slide. I know we'll get copies of them. But I was just wanted to clarify, so the 2-Gen work right now is, it's limited to early childhood only, is that correct Barb?

Barb Fabre No. are you talking for White Earth? Or are you talking for in general?

Commissioner Fineday For anybody?

Barb Fabre No actually, when we, like I said, when we're on the state statewide early childhood systems reform, even though it's called early childhood systems reform, that's where it was initiated with broader stakeholders, employment and training, housing, health department, education, Indian Child Welfare, so all those stakeholders need to be at the table to help plan this.

Commissioner Fineday Thank you.

Chair O'Neill You have another question from Commissioner Don Gray and that is, is 2-Gen work limited to early... Oh, that's yours, Anita. But Commissioner's Gray's question is what kind of data point are you tracking in your database?

Barb Fabre Mostly demographics right now. But the hope is that we'll be able to use that information on our reservation in particular. There's 11 villages, of varying size, the data will be able to help guide what communities are using the certain services, and which aren't. So using data like that, to help guide policy and referrals, I think, is very critical.

Chair O'Neill I have a quick question Barb, who owns the data that's in your database? And I guess my question, as you sort through ownership of data, is it a partnership between the tribe and the tribal members? Or does the tribe own that data? As you build out the database and use it for either, you know, how the tribe makes investments as it relates to programs, writing for grants and other, you know, areas that the tribe may have interest in?

Barb Fabre The data system that we put in place was through a grant, several grants, I should say, because it is very expensive. And yes, the tribe does own that data. And yes, so they own the data system. With tribal members, it's a volunteer program, WE CARE is a volunteer case management program. And much like Holly's clients, the family, they drive the bus, they develop a healthy, holistic family plan. And the partners support that family in their, through their plan.

Chair O'Neill Great, thank you. Other questions for Barb?

Commissioner Delmar Yes, I have a question, this is Jesse Delmar.

Chair O'Neill Yes, Jesse.

Commissioner Delmar Yes. Thank you, Barbara. That was a great presentation. Looks like you're doing a lot of good work up there. My question has to do with case management. I think you mentioned just now that it's all voluntary, and they don't specifically work for a tribal government. And what triggers case management?

Barb Fabre So, when a client comes on in any door, there's, it's a no wrong door concept. And doesn't matter which program they enter, they have all these services. So it is a volunteer for WECARE that enters, they develop or they do an intake process and through that intake process, depending how they answer, if it's immediate, if it's something short-term or long-term, that's how the referrals are based and their referral is made immediately, sent, you know, right that minute to those organizations or programs that they need immediate assistance, whether it's housing, childcare, or something else. We provide incentives over the WECARE, that helps.

Chair O'Neill We have time for another question. Do we have any other questions for Barb from the Commissioners? Dr. BigFoot?

Commissioner BigFoot Yes. Thanks for the wonderful presentation. You said this is volunteer, and I'm sorry, if my, if I'm getting a lot of static. What percentage of the tribal population actually participates in this on a volunteer basis?

Barb Fabre When I left the tribe, I believe we had approximately 10,000 entries. So our tribe is the largest tribe in Minnesota and we have over 18,000 members, tribally enrolled members. The data, the program, the WECARE, it can be for descendants or generation, third generation families. So it's not just enrolled members. And I'm sorry, I don't have the percentage to get back to you right now. But it's something I can look up and follow up with.

Chair O'Neill Thank you. And, as we close, Barb, I have one last question for you. And that is, as it relates to your initial data, what's the biggest impact in, positive impact that you're seeing in children's lives?

Barb Fabre I think the most positive impact is when you empower parents, and leaders, and you empower them with the information to make better decisions. And usually, when you do that, you support what they want to do, you're going to see the outcomes, you know, are very, very extreme. Right now we're working on a parent leadership that's indigenized using a Westernized parent leadership curriculum, and we're immersing that with culture so I am anxious and someday I'll report back to you on that initiative.

V. Kara Bobroff, Native American Community Academy

Chair O'Neill Thank you so much for the presentation. It was wonderful as Dr. BigFoot said, so really appreciate all the information that you submitted as well. So our third and final presenter is Kara Bobroff and Kara comes to us from the Native American Community Academy. Welcome Kara, and please, you have 20 minutes.

Kara Bobroff Okay. [Introduction in the Navajo language]. Good afternoon, my name is Kara Bobroff, I'm Navajo and Lakota and I am the founding principal and executive director of the Native American Community Academy, a NACA inspired schools network in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I had the opportunity to serve as a Deputy Secretary at the Public Education Department for our state recently and focused on equity, identity development and transformation in education, and kind of rethinking how we approach Indian education and indigenous education in order to serve Native students and families. So today, I just want to share kind of a real specific aspect of our school, but I will see if I can't get my screen to come up here. Okay, cool.

So first, thank you Commissioners for the opportunity to share and thank you to those presenters who presented before for their presentations as well. And I just want to start with our mission and history. And really, I think important, because when NACA started, that was really a response to an education system that wasn't meeting the needs of Native American students and we wanted to look at the opportunity to create either a Native American magnet school or charter school, in a large urban setting. There's about 90,000 students, 6,000 to 7,000 self-identified as Native American students, and within the city itself, about 40,000 Native American families. So our mission was to engage students, educators, families, and community in creating a school that would prepare our students from early learning to adulthood and begin to strengthen our communities by developing strong leaders who are academically prepared for college, secure in their identity, and healthy. So in order to do that, in 2005, we first opened in 2006, the majority of the time was spent really co-creating the mission for the school, as well as like what the outcomes for students would be. We engaged about 200 people in individual conversations, as well as like community conversations, asking them a few things related to what they saw the opportunities being. Started with the question about, why are you interested in kind of envisioning what education could be for Native youth? And largely, when we started to have this conversation for students, families, and other community stakeholders, and educators and different folks throughout the city and the State, what we really found is that people pointed back to their own experience. And for families, I think that it was really clear that because of the way they experienced education, whether it was positive or negative, or a combination of both, they were really hopeful that something could be different based on what they were missing from what they experienced. The second kind of aspect of what was brought to the surface was that families were really like, zeroed into how the school made them feel as a parent, and also how their child may have felt their identity and background was represented in the

school itself, or not represented. And also, this idea of it being a welcoming place for families to be able to work with the school. We then asked, like, what were things that were working in Native communities? What are some things that needed to be improved upon? And their opinion. And then the last question was really a centering question to kind of take this broad open idea of creating a brand new kind of model, the school is really focusing in on something that they thought was the most important or essential for us to keep in mind as we continue to do this work moving forward. With that came the last three outcomes that you see on the slide, as kids are prepared for college, that there was a strong desire to see students go into college. We know that like one in four Indian students once they get to college, actually matriculate, and, you know, basically complete, and so really wanted to change that not just for a handful of students or students in a certain program, but really all kids. And so we know that that was going to impact how we needed to work with our families as well. Second, was that students to be secure in their identity, and this came from experiences related to how they felt their identity was identified in the curriculum, could be where they felt welcome or didn't feel welcome in the school, or just the understanding of Native American students and Indigenous students in general. And then last, that they were healthy, holistically well, which guided the NACA wellness philosophy, which is basically a holistic approach to education, and growth and development for everybody in the school community. So that means students, families, teachers, as well as our community partners, so that our intellectual wellness is attended to, our social emotional wellness, our connection to our community, is really intentional, as well as our physical health and wellness. So those are the three things that came out of those discussions, that then prepared us to align our resources, program development, and to monitor outcomes based on all of those things.

So this is just a kind of a trajectory of the school itself. The things that make NACA different, we believe in how it approaches those students and families. Like one practice is that from the very beginning of a time that a student comes to the Native American Community Academy, the very first thing that we do is have a family meeting. And a family meeting is any, any family or extended family that is connected to that student, shares with us their expectations of what they want to get out of their education at the school, what they have to offer, as far as like if there's something that they want to see, contributed to the child's experience, and/or education, and then any kind of hope that they have long-term for the school, depending on when the child comes to NACA, whether it's an elementary, middle school, and or high school, and some of our students are there the entire time. The model itself is this integration of both excellence and cultural relevance in all of the courses as well as the different, I guess, out of school time, summer programs, or students support, and also thinking about how we evaluate ourselves. So that's always at the center. So it's a holistic approach to cultural relevancy, which isn't just like one class, or one program, which we often heard our family say was the case when they were in a larger school system, or in a school that didn't really have a holistic approach to culture, that they might access one class that was culturally relevant or language class, but really dependent on the school, often dependent on the principal, and often dependent on the sustainability of one

teacher, versus the entire community coming around that central idea. The second is the holistic wellness wheel, and this is something that our students, families, and staff would use throughout the entire time that the student is at the school. And it really is an ongoing way to both like assess like your own growth and development on several indicators, as well as set goals. Some of the indicators were pulled from some of the work that we shared with our Central New Mexico Community College that looked at what are some indicators of growth and success around not just like academics, but all aspects of your life. Continuing on with support from our student support services, as well as just staying respectful in notion of like indigenous core values, being at the center of how we interact with our students and families. And last is community transformations. We realize that our students and families that are coming to the school and also community partners bring in a variety of different services, perspectives, and opportunities for both students and families to participate. So it really becomes a thriving place. And we feel that if a school is truly meeting its mission, then the transformation will take place within the community itself.

So this slide kind of brings those things into to focus a little bit more for us. I'm going to start with, like the white tagline at the top of the diagram. Commitments to Community and Service. I've had an opportunity to serve as a principal in the Navajo Nation and also a dean of students in Mora County, and I think the inequities that existed between those two experiences are pretty clear in a lot of different ways. But one factor was thinking about how does the school position itself to interact with the community. What I found in one community is that there was an over, you know, overarching theme is that the school is there to serve the community, versus the school being there, to have the community kind of transform itself to be able to fit into the school. So our overarching commitment was to be a commitment to our community and to be of service to the community versus having the community to having to adjust to the school in its rigidity, or inability to be responsive to the needs. So that's the kind of the foundational piece of that. The other is like where you see these different things being held up as the same value. So not only is our curriculum like college preparatory and focused as far as the Common Core is that we also bring in our wellness philosophy, and the culture and language contexts of our students and families. So we ask that every individual who's working with our students and families works at the center of those three areas within this Venn diagram (Integrated Curriculum, Wellness Philosophy, Culture and Language Context). All of the programs that we provide, within the school day, after school, throughout the summer, and through our students support and family, community programs, also integrate these aspects into to what the students and families are experiencing.

To me, transformation is one of our six pillars. We wanted to ensure that we were able to support those students and families in their, I guess the universal idea that all of our kids are going to college. One thing that we found is that we didn't want to have just like a certain percent of our students matriculating, that all kids would, so we built their systems around that. And we realized that we have about 75 to 80% of our students are first generation college-going students. They also wanted

to be able to support you know, families and students as well as any other younger siblings with a school-based health center, access to information on college transition success. We also focused on teaching goal setting. There were student led conferences, as well as bringing in models like the Center for Working Families, which is now I believe, CNM Connect, which is our local community college. With a focus on financial literacy and key support services from kind of the initial years as the school was developed and continued on with the integrated service approach as we went forward. We staffed up pathway navigators that would connected students and families to community resources such as housing, food, college preparation, and any other kind of enrichment opportunities that students were afforded. So they had individualized coaching as well as advisement on how to access those programs. The other is like thinking about our community engagement. We felt that bringing organizations that align with the common goals of students being prepared for college, secure in their identity, and holistically prepared as well as their technical expertise need for programming. As we think about you know, the uniqueness of being in an urban setting, we realized that many of our students and families have had this like disconnect from education. And we wanted to reconnect them in a way that was both positive healing and kind of offer, offered opportunity to build on assets and reconnect with culture, as well as that experience. We found that some of our students and families had been in the city and had not necessarily reconnected with their home community. So part of that was really to ensure that we were able to provide services and also opportunities for them to do so. And thinking about student success and support, every student family has an advisor. So when I was the principal in the first year, I followed the group of 15 students for six years, from the time that they entered in the seventh, sixth or seventh grade, all the way through their first graduate, our first graduating class, and that deepens the relationship between the family and the advisor. While at the center of that is our holistic wellness wheel as far as assessing like growth and development, each student individually in that family, so you really get to know your families as well as families being able to contribute to the school. The other aspect of that was like providing professional development on strength-based coaching and understanding the role of coaching which really came from our work with the Center for Working Families, our community college partner, who provides that type of coaching for new college students as they come. So that's taking place as early as elementary school, and something that we have our staff really engaged in and understand. And then also offering free, school-based, you know, culturally relevant and high quality, comprehensive mental health services as well as school-based health services.

So I'm going to stop there, and I got five minutes, just a few stats on our school from like, early days up till now. But we represented 60 different tribes, 18 different ethnicities and languages, as well as now I think we're up to 450 students. Were co-located to Central New Mexico Community College, which also helps not only engage our students and read in education, but also our families so I'm just gonna leave this slide up. But I will stop there and take any questions that you have. But I think as far as they are thinking about this approach from the school out, just really

want to focus in on the importance of coaching, holistic mission and vision, and then some aspect of nature, in both the school programs curriculum and design.

Chair O'Neill Thank you Kara.

Kara Bobroff Sure.

Chair O'Neill That was wonderful, really appreciated you sharing your vision and your model. And that looks like the incredible impact that you've been able to make with the school. So I'd like to open it up to additional Commissioners, for comments and questions.

Commissioner BigFoot Hi, this is Dee BigFoot. Thank you, you did a wonderful job. You said you track students for six years? How? Were there other students that were tracked? And how do you measure effectiveness, you know, besides graduation? Because there's a lot of kids that can graduate but not necessarily, you know, go on to college, find jobs, be successful, maintain sobriety. I mean, you know, what are your measures of success beyond? You know.

Kara Bobroff Yes, so, I served six years as an advisor within the school. There's an advisor to a group of students, and so that provided the individual connection to each family over a period of time. The way that we measure our success is in three ways. One, whatever the accountability system is at the state level or federal level, so that often follows ESSA, so we want to make sure that we're attending to those outcomes. The second is that we have what's called a GRAD survey. And we developed it specifically to measure those other aspects of our mission. So the wellness philosophy, as well as the culture and language context and identity development. And that survey goes out every year, to our students, our teachers, our families, our community partners and our board, and provides feedback to us based on the experience of what students and families are, have their experience at the school. So a couple of things that came out of that I consider that as unique to thinking about our success. One is that 95 to 90% of our students felt that their families felt that their cultural identity was represented in the curriculum at NACA. And so if we had seen any kind of variation in that, we would have known that we are off track and trying to provide that uniqueness of our mission. Another indicator that we found from our staff is that, as we asked them if they were developing as indigenous educators, and being able to provide a holistic education. Initially, you know, we had a pretty low percentage of people to respond to that. So we were able to redesign our professional training, and give them more culturally relevant, like, experiences with indigenous education, and then came back a year and saw that that improved dramatically, to where there was close to 90% of folks who said that they felt like they were developing as an indigenous educator. In relation to other measures of how we evaluate ourselves, depending on the program, there's usually individual evaluations that take place for our students, supporters, school based health care nurses, and that team that does a lot of our family engagement work, in addition to the core, kind of in school programs. And then outside of that, I would say, we look at what's called the school review process where we have

critical friends come and spend about two and a half days to three days at the school, and they evaluate, like our operations, our systems, they look at our outcome data, collect survey data and conduct focus groups around some driving questions and then they provide a report back to our leadership team in how we were progressing that given year, which helps guide how we set our goals for the next school year.

Commissioner BigFoot Can I have a follow up? You said about the 95% approval rate. So, the students and the families find the cultural connective connection, the cultural identity, the cultural foundation, as positive, as very rewarding, as a very affirming effect. Do families send their younger siblings too, I mean, you know, what kinds of indications are there that that part of the cultural aspect is reaffirming?

Kara Bobroff So, I think the indicator where students report that they have a deep understanding of their own unique identity is kind of a self-reflective indicator through our survey. I think the other indicators is that we do see brothers and sisters that come to the school. And so we're looking at different generation of kids that are there. Their entire family is there, which I think is a positive thing, given the nature of having to, if the family is moving a lot, or if they're not able to come and stay at the school throughout the entire time. So I think the longer that we have a connection with students and families, the better we get to know them and the better outcomes that we see, as far as transition periods. Like when we looked at the establishment of the school, we saw that the local school district had an indicator that was called the at-risk rate, which was basically looking at efficiency scores, attendance, and GPA. And what they found was that this alert rate or whatever it was [connection lost] eighth grade to high school, it dropped down to 60%, and we assumed that some of those kids had like maybe not matriculated onto High School. So we see that like the ability to steer students over continuum of time has also been helpful. And the ability to work with those families and know them really well and have more personalization has been pretty helpful. So I'd say that kids stay longer, and we also see brothers and sisters that come to the school. Also that we have families who now have stayed and even though their kids have gone on and graduated, that they still volunteer in or are present within different programs that have been created. And many, many of the programs for instance, we had a group of families from Laguna Pueblo, who wanted to have not only their child take, you know their language, but they wanted to ensure that they had a space for them to come together to also engage in language classes.

The question in the chat is about how are all the programs funded? So we're funded on a per pupil basis from our state education agencies. So the majority of our funding comes from the state and or federal funding sources that come through different programs like Title I. And then in addition to that, the school-based health center is a co-, there's a MOU and a collaboration with the First Nations Health Clinic. And we also have like MOUs and collaborations with higher education entities within the city. Some of the after-school time funding is funded through special grants, as well as some of our philanthropic partners. And I would say, philanthropic partner investments on the front end were really helpful to help us

figure out how to make sure that we develop the right program. And then as the school grew, and the number of students that we saw grew, we were able to incorporate those into our operational funding.

Chair O'Neill Thank you. Do we have additional questions?

Commissioner Morris This is Elizabeth Morris. I was wondering. Hello.

Kara Bobroff Hello.

Commissioner Morris This is Elizabeth Morris. I was wondering how the children are enrolled, whether it's through a lottery. What the practices for enrollment and how your academic scores compared to the other local schools around that area.

Kara Bobroff Yes, so it's an open enrollment. We do have a lottery because we're a charter school. And basically, we start taking for our new, there's two entry points. One is in kindergarten. And then the other is a, has historically been in sixth grade. So once a child's in the school, they are there to stay, and their siblings are also able to join without having to go through a lottery. We open it up in January, and then each month we enroll students at the end of the first end of the month. We had waitlist at the freshman year, and then some at the seventh grade for mostly because there's this weird dynamic around not weird, but BIE schools sometimes go K through six. So we see some communities who want to come into the seventh grade so we have to adjust for that sometimes. But for the most part, we're able to serve the majority of our students that want to come to the school. We have a charter that's written to serve up to 615 students if we wanted to. And so we like the fact that our cap is pretty high. So we're able to accept students as readily as possible. As far as how we compare to other schools, where we have school grades, we vary from like, say we'd have like subsequent units of where we were rated a B, or C, in that sense, so I feel like we're on par, or above, but we're also doing a lot of things that our state assessment and accountability system doesn't account for. When we look at college matriculation rates, we see that because of the universal nature of some of our programs that we have four to five times like the matriculation native students that go to college, and we're working with our higher education partners to start looking at our kids succeeding in completing, which we know is a whole other area that we need to get data on and study. And also, how can we as a school help with that transition through their first year into the sophomore year. And I would say I think there's more data. We have a scorecard that we use with our network schools. In 2014, we established the NACA inspired schools network, which funds fellows to design schools within their community that meets the needs of their community. So similar to the practice that I talked to talked about at the beginning, as far as engaging your community in school to create a mission or vision or transitioning an existing school to a more indigenized model of education. And that scorecard has some mission specific indicators, as well as like, how long do kids stay? What are some of the different, you know,

academic indicators we get from our state? But also, what are the things that we need to do to improve on the things that are unique to the mission of that school?

Chair O'Neill Thank you. We do have a question in the chat, from Ms. Fineday.

Kara Bobroff Okay. Can you read them, I was trying to look for it and it's not showing up on my screen.

Chair O'Neill The questions are, are there plans to expand and open similar schools? And are there recommendations you would make for changes to legislation of programs that fund your work?

Kara Bobroff What is the plan to opening, opening new schools? Yes, we do that through our fellowship in the NACA-inspired schools network. And we don't want to like replicate NACA and whole meaning take everything that we've done and transition to a new community. But really what we do is any interested community, we provide a two-year paid fellowship for an individual to work with their community to create a community-led school with their students, families, and community. So sometimes that's in transitioning a BIE school to be in a BIE tribally led school, sometimes it's the new charter school, or it could be an existing public school or an Early Learning Center, or early learning opportunities as well. So, we're about six years into that work and there are three schools that we've been working with, actually four schools, five schools in New Mexico besides NACA. We have some fellows that are getting started in South Dakota, and two in Colorado, as well as one in the Bay Area in California. And so we really are kind of more land-based and relationship-based as far as like if there's an interest, we kind of assess the situation to see if we can find a fellow, that fellow receives two years of support, as well as help in creating a financial plan, a governance plan in the programmatic aspects of the school. Once the school launches, we continue to provide supports to the school and evaluation support as well. As far as that was the first question, I forgot what the second question was. Sorry about that.

Chair O'Neill Did you answer the question about recommendations you would make to your programs that fund your work?

Kara Bobroff I think that one thing that some of our fellows shared back to us is that, you know, if the funding is more generalized, so that they can actually design a program and their school, that's been the most beneficial to have that kind of removal of constraints while being able to build something that meets the needs of their students and families. What we find a lot is that we, depending on the funding source, sometimes we have to, quote unquote, like NACAize the program versus trying to fit it into some one size fits all. And I think that's pretty, pretty well, like experienced and in public education in general. I think the other thing that some of our fellows want to see, like, you know, more of indigenous education authorizers and so in the charter school space, whether that's in New Mexico or other areas is that how can we build authorizers that support schools that are trying to do this more holistic approach to education. And I think that would be a way to incentivize

either setting up as authorizers may have, you know, similarly to like this Commission, a commission that could work with communities on the creation of different types of models of education, that are aligned with that kind of expertise. And that would be helpful, I think. Outside of that we look at things like the Indian Education Act, and how that helps provide funding to schools to begin to establish new programs, and also redesign existing strategies so that they're more culturally relevant, and then become more sustainable within, like the operational budget of the school, but I would say those are the things. And then the last thing I would say is like investing in coaching of existing school staff around coaching models and how to work with families in more of a holistic way. And also, I would say, to incentivize schools, whether they're in the BIE system or public education systems to have more community-based integrated service models, and working more collaboratively with those agencies that also provide those services to students and families so they're embedded in the school itself.

Chair O'Neill Thank you. I know that Dr. McDonald has a question. You've been waiting so patiently.

Commissioner McDonald I've been clicking on and off, but I really appreciate what you've been sharing and, especially the recommendation that you shared. NACA, if you if you it's spelled the same way as NACHA. And then yeah, and so in Lakota would know that, you know. That's kind of that's one, that's our leadership that's within our upper tier leadership of our leadership of our people, you know, so those are prominent positions. So maybe you want to change the pronunciation of your name? Because it certainly looks like that you're on the right track in regard to developing leadership for the students that you serve. And this one's not really a question but maybe statements just to kind of help enforce the good work that you're doing. One is the importance of self-identity issues that we're experiencing as people we're off with the loss of our culture, cultural, cultural way of life. And in recognizing the federal genocide, initiatives that occurred to us and intergenerational trauma, you know, that that's, that's happening and I know that there's experts on this Commission that are, you know, speak to that, and, and how this model I think, helps to address some of those things and to focus on that self-identity. The other piece of this is that if you look at the research literature out there, especially in areas of education, those students that are more knowledgeable in their culture, are more likely to succeed academically. So those two are tied together in regard to regard to success of our students. And then lastly, I guess, the importance of dual credit and giving a head start to those students in high school before so that they can get a step up when they come out and graduate and then move on to post-secondary. The other part is, I know the culture, history, the language and the presentations on traditional storytelling, all good stuff. Anything on the ceremonial parts of our people. Are you doing any of that?

Kara Bobroff Thank you Commissioner McDonald. Yes, we are engaged with some of our community partners and we hire counselors who have a strong background in cultural practices, so that families can access related to either individual sessions with those practitioners and or ongoing sweats. We have developed a sweat at the

school itself. And then we also partner with somebody in a nonprofit organization that has a focus on young men and boys to be able to provide some of those experiences around cultural teachings and also some ceremonies and it's an opt-in so families can access it and students can access it. We provided a space called the Eagle Room, which was a place for students and families and staff to be able to go where they could, if they wanted to engage in that time to use you know different things from the tribe that makes sense since we had a variety of different tribes. We invited our families, elders, and also community advisors to come talk to our staff about those teachings. So people have a grounding and what that means at any given time of the year and we start with that as I as I was finding ourselves within the land base in which we are in order to do that. So those things are incorporated into how we live and breathe at the school as well and also continuing to try to develop our own experiences and knowledge.

Commissioner McDonald Thank you. I think that's especially important and recognize that the Diné and the Lakotas especially are so strong in regard to the ceremonies of their people and are strong in regard to still having speakers of the language which contains the culture, which contains the oral traditions and especially in regard to family -- the importance of family within our culture and spirituality. So thank you very much. We appreciated your sharing.

Kara Bobroff Thank you.

VI. Questions and discussion

Chair O'Neill Thank you. Other questions from Commissioners? Thank you so much for a wonderful presentation and I hope you can stay with us. The last 20 minutes or so of our hearing what I would like to do is. Excuse me, I had to turn my speaker on. Thank you again for the wonderful presentation and I hope you can stay with us as we get into the last 20 minutes or so of our meeting today, I'd like to now open it up for a dialogue with the Commissioners. And as you know we are working with our consultants on a comprehensive study on programs, grants, supports available for Native children both at government agencies and on the ground in our own communities. So, this effort is with the goal of developing a sustainable system that delivers wraparound services to our Native children and completely supports them. So we really appreciate your expertise to the three presenters today and allowing us to deepen our understanding a bit more, and also to let us know what's happening in our own communities and some of the incredible positive impact that you're making in our children's lives. We are really looking forward to looking at and identifying new strategies for lasting solutions. I think we've heard those here today. And really understanding how we can best address the needs of our children. So with that, I'd just like to open it up for comments from Commissioners of, maybe areas that we could direct the detailees and our consultants in looking for additional information, potentially on the 2-Gen approach that you've heard. We heard a lot about integration of resources and supporting not only the entire whole person but family and doing it in a way of looking at the various generations. And also, just how can we be more thoughtful when supporting our young people

in our education systems that you heard of how we take the integrated approach and ensure that our young people are on track for great opportunities as they develop into young adults. So with that, I would just like to open it up for comments from the Commissioners. Who would like to start?

Commissioner Staebner Hi this is Commissioner Melody Staebner. Just hearing all of these programs today, these are the topics that we've been really discussing in our office and with our administration and these are programs that work. We do a lot of grassroots work with our students here and just hearing about those wraparound services with families -- that's really important. We were just talking yesterday looking at our list of students and identifying you know why some of these students might be successful. You know, what are the strengths of the student and what's kind of happening in their life and then what are some of the challenges that our students are facing. And we know how important it is to address the whole family unit when the students, their families are stable, that's when the students can do well in school. And we just see a lot of kids that are struggling in school, because there are so many other things in their life that they can't control that need to be addressed. So I just, these are great programs and hearing too about with the last program here about the culture that they tie into their school and the curriculum. We did a needs assessment last year and the things that came out on top was students and families wanting to see more of themselves in the content. They want to see themselves embedded in the curriculum. And then also those students support pieces that they have there and community partnerships we know how important that is to help address the whole, you know all the different things that are going on in the student's life. So I just want to say that, you know, there's a lot of good things. A lot of good programs here, and I wish we could replicate it. In so many other communities it can be a challenge. I know in an urban setting to address all the needs of, you know, our Native children that's just kind of my input here and, you know, these are some real good topics that we've been discussing, you know, within our district.

Chair O'Neill Thank you Commissioner Staebner. Dr. McDonald.

Commissioner McDonald I appreciate Commissioner Staebner's comments and also the presentations and how I think all that ties together. We see the importance of collaboration as well. We're in an urban environment district too. You know, but having come from our reservation community there's similarities here, and I don't know we tend to be isolated in the reservation and we kind of self-contain and we don't really reach out as much as I think we should. That's why I think these best practices of these models of collaboration are so important for us. Here in town in Bismarck, we recognize that we reach out into the Bismarck Mandan Community we're getting better at it. We've been doing this for several years and how we could work better with our sister colleges in town, with the Native organizations here in town in order to help us serve our students who are really community members of Bismarck and Mandan as well as our campus. And so and then we also have an elementary school here and a daycare on campus, so all these things are tied together. And then tying in the importance of culture and how these things, how that continue, I believe is

the basis for us as a people that we need as a foundation, in order to build upon and try to recover as much as we can to give to help us address this issue of self-identity that we've all lost. And that we've all maybe had to have some type of experience on it depending on our families and what faith our family members to maintain? I think the value system is still there for the most part and the spirituality part is and is so, and is very diverse and you have those that are really traditional. There's the Native American church. There's a Catholic, Assembly of God, there's Christianity, Christian based people, and that's all of our people now. So we've, this is part this is the that we're working with now, we have to do our best to try to recognize the diversity at the same time as we build models and that and as we move ahead. But I still think that the cultural value system and there's that time back into the self-identity piece, and then how we interact with these other systems, I think is important for moving ahead in a positive way. So and then being able to work with people where they're at and recognizing that this, maybe there's maybe some dysfunction within those families that we'll have to address and we'll need different tools in order to help us address that and help them be healthy. So that they can have a stronger family dynamic, stronger family values that can then is there with a goal of protecting the child, with a goal of caring for the child and in our role here as a Commission is going to pull us together. So thank you.

Chair O'Neill

Thank you Dr. McDonald.

Commissioner
Morris

This is Elizabeth Morris. I appreciate Dr. McDonald's reference to diversity because it is so true. And so that would be my one comment is that a lot of these programs are taking place in the tribal community, and so the population that they're serving in general has a more united point of view maybe. But as we've talked about before, many of the children that live across the country and aren't living in Indian Country. I mean I know White Earth well, I know Leech Lake well, I know children in the Fargo area that do not want to, well, the truth, I know children in the Fargo area that do not want to identify as Indian because they don't want these programs pushed on them. And that's just a reality. And so that has to be always made aware to the diversity does exist and that not all of the programs when we're trying to serve such a wide variety of children can be cookie cutter type things or can it can be expected that they would respond in exactly the same way.

Commissioner
McDonald

I would argue that perhaps they do not want to self-identify as Native because of the racism and prejudice that exists within our area. I think we have to take that into consideration as well.

Commissioner
Morris

That might be true for some.

Commissioner
McDonald

We see this especially for this time period not only within our area here in North Dakota, but within our region, but also within our nation. And I think that's been detrimental overall.

Commissioner Morris Yeah, I'm referring to families that are not, not responding that way due to racism. That again is a cookie cutter assumption. There are plenty of families that would rather be independent.

Chair O'Neill Thank you for your comment. What I'd like to do is ask if additional Commissioners have comments? Yes, Ms. Fineday.

Commissioner Fineday I just I wanted to add on to the comments that Commissioner McDonald made and just say that, I think a theme that ran through all of the presentations is the importance of culture, the importance of language, the importance of positive role models from the tribal communities. And both for adults and for children and the importance of language and culture and been shown in many studies to have, you know, many benefits, brain development and academic experience and academic achievement are all improved by having strong cultural ties and being proud of who you are. So I think that's a common theme. I don't think any of the programs that we've heard testimony about are what I would call cookie cutter. They all seem like they were tailored to fit the communities that they are serving. So I'm just going to say thank you to the presenters. The work that you're doing is so important for our youth and children and to and also the work in support of our families. So thank you.

Chair O'Neill Thank you, Ms. Fineday. Other comments? Dr. BigFoot.

Commissioner BigFoot Yes. Thank you. I thought the presentations were wonderful and we're thankful that we can have discussion back and forth. I would like to recall the presentation about brain development and how the environment, especially a traumatic environment, a climate that is not healthy for children will create, you know those outcomes that we talked about in terms of that first childhood experience. But it creates you know that, testing of boundaries, the degree of trust a person has. When we look at the, you know family dynamics and with the history of children especially in the child welfare or juvenile justice system, or even the, you know, [inaudible] have had the history of boarding schools. I've been, my own family, you know we come from a history of boarding schools and you know, say that my children's took my mother [inaudible] to love because of her own experience being raised in a boarding school. And so I think that when we when we consider, you know, what families are striving for in terms of thriving and feeling confident in their own skills and in their own ability to manage the crisis. What we see is this cultural identity has an important aspect and that culture can be a variety things. It is wonderful when I see it within the cultural culture of tribal identity, and certainly different kinds of cultures. There is, you know, sports culture, you know, people who identified with sports or military culture, environmental culture, I mean, you know, people have different identities that they can identify with, including, you know, religious culture. But the thing that I have seen and I've worked, you know, all over the U.S. with multiple tribes is that children who come from a history of trauma, that when they have the opportunity to recognize and build on their cultural identity, that they that they thrive. And they recognize the harm that has been done in terms of colonization, and in terms of, you know, policies that were not helpful for American Indian

families and Alaskan Native families and we can just look at the boarding schools or the removal of children or any number of things. And so I think being able to look at not only reservation boundaries where tribes are governed out of, but also I mean, I'm in Oklahoma. I'm in you know in Norman, Oklahoma. I'm off, I guess I shouldn't say off reservation given the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling on boundaries. But, in urban settings I have children that live in urban settings, I have grand children in urban setting and you know, that's Indian country too. So as we, throughout, you know the history that has skewed the perception of what it means to be a Native person, I think we need to weigh that carefully and recognize that when people have choices, that having choices is important. And that I think that's one of the things that we've been able to promote here is as we look at these different opportunities and as we look at, we're framing this that we recognize that choice is an important aspect of the programs that we'll be, you know, scrutinizing.

Chair O'Neill Thank you, Dr. Bigfoot. I would I know we have a few minutes left and before we close the meeting, I'd like to hear from those Commissioners that haven't had a chance to make comments and that is Dr. DeCoteau and Mr. Gray.

Commissioner Gray Madam Chair, this is Commissioner Gray. There's been an awful lot of information to digest. And I mean it was, it was really, really informative. You know what you guys are doing with the 477 program is just downright impressive. I really appreciated the child's learning and trauma development and everyone's discussions today. I'm kind of left wondering, what the link is or is there a link between culture as we historically kind of think of culture as in, you know, hunting and fishing and language and the whole nine yards. And what does that mean to be Native today? What does it mean to be Native in a rural area? What does it mean to be Native in the city? What does culture mean today? And, historically when I hear people talk about culture, it's always in past tense on knowing the importance of where you come from, who your elders are, and your descendants, and the whole nine yards. I find that people are struggling with trying to identify, you know what does that mean in today's world when we're hunting caribou, on four wheelers and burning unleaded gas and or hunting whales within 34 foot kingfishers doing 40 knots per hour using bombs, and what is it mean to be Native today? And you know, I had kind of similar thoughts that were going through my mind but I really did appreciate everybody's presentation today thank you.

Chair O'Neill Thank you and I do think that's an important question that we should bring forward in our work as we gather more information so I'd like to ensure that we note that within the detailees along with our experts that we are working with. Dr. DeCoteau, do you have some closing thoughts?

Vice-Chair DeCoteau Yes, I just want to say thank you so much to all the presenters. Those were really great presentations and I am impressed to see all the work that everybody has done and have some takeaways myself in terms of effort for collaboration and just I see that in the presentations been given, there's a lot of broad based services, and integration and collaboration. And I think those are really key factors in working effectively for tribal people. So, thank you so much for your presentations.

VII. Wrap up

Chair O'Neill Thank you. Well, we have a few minutes to close the call. And again, I really want to thank Holly, Barb, and Kara, it was wonderful, great presentations. I'm excited that we've now started this work with the virtual hearings, and look forward to many more across all the various areas that we want to take a deep dive into including juvenile justice, social work, education, and mental and physical health. I am so very excited about the work of the Commission. And just know that we will ensure that we've included you in our work and that we appreciate the written testimony along with the presentations and the time and energy that you put into it. It will be very informative as we write our report and make recommendations so Quyana for all of your time. And thank you for your leadership in your heart and what you do on behalf of our young people and our families. Really impressive. Great to see you all, thank you for your time.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]

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