

Witness Testimony

Testimony of Holly Morales to the Commission on Native Children
Hearing, August 20, 2021

Speaker Bio

On behalf of Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC), thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony for the Commission on Native Children. My name is Holly Morales and I am currently the Senior Director for the Employment and Training Services Department. I am a proud Yup'ik tribal member, but bring a blended cultural background as my mother is from Boston, Massachusetts with Irish descent. I have the honor of working at CITC for the past 24 years and excited to share some of our suggestions and best practices for how to continue to serve Native children more effectively.

Key components of CITC's Best Practice approach to serve Native Youth:

PL 102-477 (477)- CITC had the privilege of providing testimony in September 2020 around multi-generation approach and had talked briefly about this crucial law. CITC is able to consolidate funding from multiple federal departments and agencies into one plan, one budget and one report under PL 102-477. 477 allows tribes across the nation to increase efficiency, decrease administrative burden, increase self-determination and ensure superior results over counterparts at the state and county level, all while maintaining program guidelines. The amended law in 2017, expanded participating agencies from four to twelve (12). These include: Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Labor, Transportation, Veteran Affairs, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Justice.

How this impacts Native youth at CITC:

- Common Intake – participants meet with Intake to identify immediate needs and services available for the whole family. Getting services to families faster.
- Eligibility Efficiency- providing eligibility for multiple programs by one staff person, reduces multiple applications and appointments. Linking services easier because programs are not operating in silos.
- Efficiencies Allow Innovation- by providing services with cost efficiencies we can direct funding to more innovative program development and cultural/spiritual activities.
- Successful Outcomes- youth have access to more wrap around services, this helps with more successful youth and address barriers quickly by maximizing resources.
- Increases coordination- As mentioned earlier, programs operating in silos do not support coordination of services, and often experiences duplication of services. Under 477 staff can work seamlessly across programs addressing needs of each unique youth. Models encourages integrated case management, by putting the youth in the center of priority.

Recommendation

Based on CITC's experience and ongoing innovative efforts, we recommend to create ways, similar to PL 102-477, for Tribes and Tribal Organizations to consolidate funding across departments and agencies to better serve Alaska Native and American Indian children, youth and families to eliminate duplication and enhance wrap around service delivery.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these written comments on behalf of the Native children and youth we serve.