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COMMISSION ON NATIVE CHILDREN’S
SOUTHWEST/WESTERN REGIONAL HEARING BROUGHT
TOGETHER EXPERTS AND THE PUBLIC FOR ROBUST
DISCUSSIONS ON THE NEEDS OF NATIVE CHILDREN

Phoenix, AZ — The Commission on Native Children held a
hearing last month in Phoenix, AZ. The Southwest/Western
Regional Hearing was the second in a series of regional
hearings the Commission is holding throughout the United
States. The Great Plains/Midwest Regional Hearing will
follow next in Bismarck, ND, June 23–24.

Congress established the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter
Soboleff Commission on Native Children as an independent
federal entity charged with conducting a comprehensive
study of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and
developing recommendations on solutions that would
improve the health, safety, and well-being of Native Children.

Over a series of hearings and other events, the Commission is
examining the unique challenges Native children face and
make recommendations on improving the current system by
building on the strengths and leadership of Native
communities, with the goal of developing a sustainable
system that delivers effective, culturally appropriate,
meaningful wrap-around services to Native children.

The Southwest/Western Regional Hearing featured a series of
panel discussions and presentations from respected
researchers and experts in the region. The following high-
level themes were shared with the Commission:

- Holistic support systems for children need to be culturally-
  based and address specific needs within the community;
- Integration of culture and language into the foundational
  institutions of Native children's lives in both reservation and
  urban settings is critical to their success;
- Support mechanisms for children need to extend to their
  families and communities; and
Native communities would greatly benefit from flexible funding and employment requirements.

**Panel 1: Health, Mental Health, and Behavioral Health**
- Dr. Jennie Joe, PhD, Mph, Professor Emerita, Department of Family and Community Medicine in the College of Medicine at the University of Arizona
- Orenda R. Hill, Native Health Community Health Director, Community Health and Wellness
- Christopher Sharp, Director, Office of American Indian Projects, School of Social Work, Arizona State University
- Maria Walker, Nursing Student, Arizona State University

**Panel 2: Education and Early Childhood Development**
- Kevin Shendo, Education Director, Pueblo of Jemez
- Esther Nystrom, Mesa School District Indian Education Program
- Dr. Bryan Brayboy, President’s Professor in the School of Social Transformation, Director of the Center for Indian Education, Arizona State University

**3: Child Welfare, Juvenile Justice, and Violence**
- Kami Hart, Chief Judge, Gila River Indian Community Children’s Court
- Timothy Sandefur, Vice President for Litigation, Goldwater Institute
- Alfred Urbina, Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General, Pascua Yaqui Tribe
- Mikah Carlos, Youth Representative, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, National Indian Child Welfare Association Board

**Panel 4: Systems Innovations and Best Practices in Native Communities**
- Gil Vigil, Tribal Council, Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council, Inc
- Andrea Kilmas, Clinical Supervisor, Native American Connections, Patina Wellness Center
- Dr. Sheila E. Nicholas, Associate Professor in the Department of Teaching, Learning and Sociocultural Studies at the University of Arizona

To view panelists bios, presentations, written testimonies, and suggested readings, please visit the Commission’s website at [https://commissiononnativechildren.org/southwest-and-western-regional-hearing/](https://commissiononnativechildren.org/southwest-and-western-regional-hearing/)

To learn more, please visit [www.commissiononnativechildren.org](http://www.commissiononnativechildren.org). For media inquiries, contact Regina Gilbert: regina.gilbert@bia.gov.

Follow the Commission on Facebook at: [Alyce Spotted Bear & Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children](https://www.facebook.com/asbwscnc), or on Twitter: [@asbwscnc](https://twitter.com/asbwscnc).

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