

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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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/>

To learn more, please visit 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/AlyceSpottedBearandWalterSoboleffCommissiononNativeChildren), or on Twitter: [@asbwscnc](https://twitter.com/asbwscnc).

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