



## Commission on Native Children

May 12, 2023

11 am – 1 pm AKT/1 – 3 pm MT/2 – 4 pm CT/3 – 5 pm ET

### **Virtual Hearing: Parental Involvement and Truancy Prevention/Intervention to Improve School Outcomes for Native children**

This panel will examine structures and processes based on practice, academic, and research to strengthen school, family, and community partnerships and programs and improve student attendance and school outcomes for Native children and youth. Studies show that well-designed and well-implemented plans for family and community engagement have positive results for the academic achievement and social-emotional development of Native children and youth, both in and out of Native communities. Similarly, new approaches to improve student attendance and reduce chronic absenteeism have turned away from criminalizing such behavior to supporting school attendance with protective factors at home, at school, and in the community. These strategies focus on developing and continually improving goal-linked programs of family and community engagement in all schools and at all grade levels. Organized leadership for partnerships and customized program designs are needed to correct historical failures of school systems to acknowledge the unique relationships and circumstances of Alaska Native, Native American, and Native Hawaiian students, families, and schools. The panelists will provide insights into successful practices to improve the quality of school life and outcomes for Native children and families.

- Introductions and welcome (5 minutes) Chair O’Neill
- Invocation (3 minutes) Called upon
- Review of Commission Norms (2 minutes) Chair O’Neill

The Commission will adhere to the following norms in all interactions:

- To incorporate ceremony and/or prayer to begin each meeting
- To recognize and celebrate what is working





**Joyce L. Epstein**, Ph.D. in sociology from Johns Hopkins University, is Co-Director of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships and Professor of Education in the Johns Hopkins University School of Education. In 1995, she established the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), which provides professional development for leaders to develop research-based programs of family and community engagement ([www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org)). She has over one hundred fifty publications including *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, 4th Edition* (Corwin, 2019) and a textbook for college courses, *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools*, (with S. Sheldon), 3rd Edition (Taylor & Francis, 2023). Dr. Epstein was named a Fellow of the American Educational Research Association in 2009 and received the Elizabeth Cohen Award for Applied Research (2009) from AERA's Sociology of Education Special Interest Group. In all of her work she is interested in the connections of research, policy, and practice.



**Megan Bang** (Ojibwe and Italian descent) is a Professor of Learning Sciences and Psychology at Northwestern University and is currently serving as the Senior Vice President at the Spencer Foundation. She is a former pre-school teacher, middle school teacher, and GED educator. She has been focused on community based settings and education. She was the former Director of Education at the American Indian Center (AIC), where she served in this role for 12 years. Her research is centered on understanding culture, cognition, and development with a specific focus on the complexities of navigating multiple meaning systems in creating and implementing more effective learning environments with Indigenous students, teachers, and communities both in schools

and in community settings.

Megan's work focuses on decolonizing and indigenizing education with a focus on "STEAM." More specifically she works to create learning environments that build on Indigenous ways of knowing, attend to issues of self-determination, and work towards socially and ecologically just futures. Megan approaches her work in both schools and informal settings through rigorous mixed methods, from utilizing experimental design in her foundational cognition and development studies, to community-based participatory design work in which she co-designs learning and teaching with communities, families, and youth.

Dr. Bang has won several awards including the AERA early career award in Indigenous Education as well as the Division K early career award in Teaching and Teacher Education. She is currently serving on the Board of Science Education at the National Academy of Sciences, the Education and Human Resources Advisory Committee at the National Science Foundation, and the editorial boards of several top journals. She also serves on the board of Directors for Grassroots Indigenous Multi-media, an organization focused on Ojibwe language revitalization.



**Johanna Farmer** (Lakota) is an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. She joined the National American Indian Court Judges Association as a Program Attorney in June 2022. She works on policy and conducts training and technical assistance on tribal justice issues including collateral consequences and child welfare. Prior to this, Johanna worked for the Pascua Yaqui Tribe for over thirteen (13) years. She served in a number of capacities; she completed her time there as the Itom Yoemia (known on the national level as the “Tiwahe” Initiative) Program Manager and Deputy Director of Economic and Community Development. She strengthened the Pascua Yaqui Community and families through tribally driven and culturally relevant service models with an emphasis on intervention and prevention services through a coordinated and integrated service delivery among multiple tribal agencies and departments. Johanna worked in managing youth programming including all children’s services at the Social Services Department, a

juvenile diversion program focused on mentoring at the Office of the Prosecutor, and a juvenile defense program. Johanna systemized changes to the child welfare system to launch and implement the tribal title IV-E plan, making the Pascua Yaqui Tribe the eighth tribe in the country to receive direct IV-E funds. She also co-created a truancy diversion program in the Office of the Prosecutor, which improved attendance for participants by 7%. She served as a consultant to the Tribal Law and Policy Institute on matters surrounding education and truancy. Johanna earned a Juris Doctorate from the University of Arizona as well as an Indigenous Peoples Law and Policy Certificate. Prior to law school, Johanna graduated with Bachelor’s degrees in Political Science, Theatre Arts, and Native American studies from the University of Minnesota, Morris. Her passion to serve tribal communities comes from her Grandparents’ encouragement and the example as World War II Veterans and public servants. Johanna is a licensed attorney.