



**Commission on Native Children
March 12, 2021
2 – 4 pm ET/10 am – 12 pm AK**

**Virtual Hearing: Early Childhood Development Programs as
Prevention and Promise**

This hearing will discuss the importance of early childhood programming serving children 0-5 in Native communities. Decades of research has shown that brain development happens most quickly in the first months and years of life. Building on this knowledge, there is increasing recognition of the need to invest in high quality programs to serve young children and their families. Programs like Head Start, child care, pre-kindergarten, and home visiting have all been shown to have positive impacts on child and family development, supporting increased child and family health, improved school readiness and academic achievement, and improved family economic self-sufficiency. In American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities, Head Start, child care, and home visiting programs have all had significant success and impact on child and family outcomes as well as on the health and well-being of the community. Programs have increased community connectedness, strengthened the overall early childhood system, reinforced child and family connection to culture and Native identity, and supported Native language revitalization. During this hearing, researchers and program leaders will present information on the need for and impact of early childhood development programs in Native communities, including successes, challenges, and opportunities for creating more seamless systems of support for young children and their families.

- Introductions and welcome (5 minutes) Vice Chair
- Invocation (3 minutes) Dr. Leander McDonald
- Review of Commission Norms (2 minutes) Dr. Leander McDonald

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

- To respect all ideas
 - To be mindful of each person's own behavior and reactions so as not to repeat trauma behaviors
 - To promote healing
 - To ensure there is a community-organized closing event at hearings
 - To treat others as they want to be treated
 - To not take offense and observe without judgment
 - To pause before decision
 - To have fearless, honest dialogue
 - To be flexible
 - To hear all voices
 - To learn from story
 - To be respectful of time
- Overview of Commission and goals of meeting (5 minutes) Vice Chair
 - Michelle Sarche, Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, Colorado School of Public Health (10 minutes, 3 minutes for questions)

Michelle Sarche, PhD (Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe), is an Associate Professor in the Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, Colorado School of Public Health. Dr. Sarche has been working with tribal communities for more than 20 years to conduct research on parenting and children's early development. Her work includes the Tribal Early Childhood Research Center, the Native Children's Research Exchange, the Maternal Child Health Link program, and the Buffering Toxic Stress Consortium. Her work has been supported by the Administration for Children and Families, the Health Resources and Services Administration, and the National Institutes on Drug Abuse, Mental Health, and Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Dr. Sarche is a member of the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Ojibwe. Beginning with her involvement in the former American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Research Center (2005-2011) and continuing with the Tribal Early Childhood Research Center, Dr. Sarche has worked with federal program staff, American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start directors, Tribal Child Care and Development Fund administrators, Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting programs, and researchers from higher education and research institutions to collaboratively identify and address the most important issues facing early childhood educators in tribal communities.

- Lana Garcia, Pueblo of Jemez (10 minutes, 3 minutes for questions)

Lana Garcia joined the Pueblo of Jemez Walatowa Head Start Program in October 2007. Since joining the Head Start family, Lana served as the Chairperson of the Southwest Consortium of Indian Head Start Programs Board of Directors from 2009-2014, providing professional development opportunities and trainings for tribal Head Start, Early Head Start, and child care programs throughout the nation. She is part of the American Indian/Alaska Native Advisory Council on Native Language as a representative of the Head Start community. She currently manages the Walatowa Head Start Language Immersion Program. In 2016, Ms. Garcia was

honored by President Barack Obama during the National Teacher of the Year event at the White House.

- Jennifer Rackliff, National Indian Child Care Association (10 minutes, 3 minutes for questions)

Jennifer Rackliff, M.Sc., is the Executive Director of the National Indian Child Care Association. The National Indian Child Care Association (NICCA) is the recognized representative body of the Tribal Child Care and Development Fund Grantees and supports child care programs by promoting high quality, culturally relevant child care and development and by providing leadership, support, and advocacy on behalf of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. Ms. Rackliff has worked for over 15 years to improve the social and economic well-being of Native people. From public health to workforce development, from family supports to education, both higher and of our youngest citizens, Ms. Rackliff's career has led through policy and advocacy, grassroots education and mobilization, and research and program implementation. Ms. Rackliff serves on various data and health advisory councils focused on early childhood education, including the Tribal Early Childhood Working Group of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Native Americans and Office of Early Childhood Development, and the Data Advisory Group and the Child Care Licensing Benchmarking Workgroup with Child Care Aware of America. Ms. Rackliff is Global Leader for Young Children representing the U.S. at the World Forum Foundation. She is an active advocate for children, families, and communities whose voices are not adequately represented and for indigenous peoples in the U.S. and around the globe. Ms. Rackliff has a Master of Science in Global Health from Duke University and a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Native American Studies from Dartmouth College. She holds a Certificate of Evaluation and Applied Research Methods from Claremont Graduate University School of Behavioral and Organizational Sciences. Ms. Rackliff is an enrolled member and citizen of the Cherokee Nation and lives on a ranch in northeastern Oklahoma with her 5-year old daughter.

- Lisa Martin, Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan (10 minutes, 3 minutes for questions)

Lisa Martin, MPH, a member of the Ojibwe Nation/Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, has more than 20 years of experience working in Michigan Tribal Communities. Prior to her most recent role as the Program Director for the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan Tribal Home Visiting Program, Mrs. Martin served as the Evaluator for both the Healthy Start Project and Tribal Home Visiting Program. Mrs. Martin has extensive experience implementing and managing projects with Tribal communities, including several community-based research and population surveillance initiatives.

- Cross-Cutting Recommendations from Witnesses (20 minutes) Vice Chair
- Questions and discussion (30 minutes) Vice Chair
- Wrap up (3 minutes) Vice Chair