



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Tribal Consultation Summary Report September 12, 2019 Phoenix, Arizona

Pursuant to the First Things First (FTF) Tribal Consultation Policy and Arizona Revised Statutes section 41-2051, FTF convened a formal consultation session on Thursday, September 12, 2019. The purpose of the consultation was to receive feedback on supporting professional development of the early childhood workforce.

FTF is committed to meaningful consultation with tribes through which elected officials and other authorized representatives of the tribal governments have the opportunity to provide meaningful and timely input regarding the development of policies or procedures that affect Arizona's tribes, Native American children and their families.

The following summary reflects comments and questions raised by Arizona's tribal leaders and their authorized representatives/designees.

Participants

Tribal Leaders and Representatives

Gabriel Lopez, Vice Chairman, Ak-Chin Indian Community

Dr. Bill Myhr, Education Director, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation

Isaac Salcido, Tribal Education Director, Gila River Indian Community

Carletta Tilousi, Councilwoman, Havasupai Tribe

Ophelia Watahomigie-Corliss, Councilwoman, Havasupai Tribe

Malinda Andrews, Executive Advisor for Chairman, Hopi Tribe

Jonell Tapija, Councilwoman, Hualapai Tribe

Myron Lizer, Vice President, Navajo Nation

Yvonne Kee-Billison, Executive Assistant for the Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Nation

Crystalyne Curly, Public Information Officer for Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Nation

Dr. Ann Parker, Education Director, Pascua Yaqui Tribe

Dr. Cynthia Clary, Acting Superintendent, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community

Jerome Kasey III, Vice Chairman, White Mountain Apache Tribe

Monica Cromwell, Public Relations Staff, White Mountain Apache Tribe

First Things First

Helena Whitney, Vice Chair, FTF Board

Marilee Dal Pra, Chief Executive Officer

Amelia Flores, Member, FTF Board
Ginger Sandweg, Senior Director of Early Learning

Candida Hunter, Senior Director of Tribal Affairs

In addition, FTF staff members and representatives from state agencies were in attendance to observe the consultation.

Summary

In Arizona, there are several efforts to support the early childhood workforce to promote higher education for early childhood professionals including providing scholarships for individuals to receive their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, associate degree or bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field. For professionals (those with or without degrees), it is also important to provide access to professional development that offers continuous learning for anyone working with young children. It is beneficial to all staff and children when early childhood professionals continue to gain knowledge by developing new skills based on the most recent research and best practices. Tribal leaders and representatives shared information and insight on:

- Educational and professional development opportunities for early childhood professionals available in their communities;
- Successes achieved and challenges accessing those opportunities;
- Ways in which programs are and can be culturally responsive to meet the needs of early childhood professionals in their tribal communities; and
- Feedback on the Early Childhood Workforce Registry, scholarships and opportunities to enhance coordination and collaboration to support early childhood professionals.

Access to Professional Development for the Early Childhood Workforce in Tribal Communities

- Hopi Tribe Chairman Executive Advisor Malinda Andrews shared that they partner and have some agreements with local colleges and universities to help paraprofessionals obtain their CDAs and other degrees, including Northern Arizona University, Prescott College and Northland Pioneer College, which is located within their reservation.
- Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President (O P V P) Executive Assistant Yvonne Kee-Billison stated they also collaborate with Northland Pioneer College. In addition, they collaborate with their local tribal colleges and the President and Vice President are working on expanding partnerships with other colleges in and around the Navajo Nation. She also suggested there needs to be more intent on increasing the opportunities for early childhood educators, including curriculum development and professional development to deal with mental health situations that occur relating to children birth to 5 years old.
- Havasupai Tribe Councilwoman Ophelia Watahomigie-Corliss shared that the tribe is collaborating with Northern Arizona University, who received a Kellogg Foundation grant, to assist early childhood education professionals. In addition, Head Start and Early Head Start funding allows teachers to access online programs.
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe Education Director Dr. Ann Parker shared that the tribe provides mandatory

training in the following areas: first aid, CPR, food handling, child protective services and mandatory reporting. The tribe also brings professionals on a regular basis to provide additional training in the areas of: teaching strategies, developing early literacy skills, the learning environment, early childhood curriculum, screening and learning assessments, typical and atypical development, family development and children's literature and health. Lastly, they have a tribal library available and funding is provided to attend conferences and trainings.

Professional Development Successes and Challenges in Tribal Communities

- Havasupai Tribe Councilwoman Ophelia Watahomigie-Corliss stated access to colleges and universities is a challenge and since the Office of Head Start changed the requirements for teachers to get certificates or degrees, there were some concerns that teachers in Head Start and Early Head Start would have to leave the village to obtain their education. Recently, the Tribe initiated a pilot program allowing early learning staff to take online classes. A challenge with the pilot is that the broadband is only accessible in seven homes in the village and the equipment needs to be upgraded to provide a better signal in the outskirts of the village. Also, consultants coming to the village to teach for a week or two has increased the educational opportunities and ability for teachers to get required continuing education units.
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe Education Director Dr. Ann Parker mentioned that recently three teachers obtained their higher education degrees through an online college. Additionally, the time requirement for the coursework did cause some barriers.
- Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer shared that there are many faith-based ministries and work groups in the Nation that have strengthened early childhood. He also shared information about a Chief Manuelito Scholar who completed her degree online by driving 45 minutes to the nearest McDonald's that had free Wi-Fi. Lastly, he stated it would be helpful if the federal government subsidized access to broadband.
- Hualapai Tribe Councilwoman Jonell Tapija shared that they provide a laptop and clothing allowance for any student going to college. In addition, tribal employees receive educational leave if they are working at the child care center or Head Start. The directors allow them to take a couple hours of their workday to do their school work since most students are taking online courses. In July, they have recognition activities to encourage professional development such as graduation dinners. The Tribe also has a GED program and are interested in becoming a test center so students do not have to take their GED tests in Kingman. Challenges faced include Mohave Community College being located 45 miles from the reservation because of transportation limitations.
- Gila River Indian Community Tribal Education Director Isaac Salcido shared that one of the challenges in their community is hiring entry-level staff who have completed their high school diploma to be ready to take college courses. He is interested in some sort of competency-based training program for entry-level childhood professionals that can be coordinated with input from tribes.
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe Education Director Dr. Ann Parker agreed that some of their family home providers do have their GED but are reluctant to take additional classes and training and seem

to be reluctant to have FTF coaches and mentors come to their home.

- Hopi Tribe Chairman Executive Advisor Malinda Andrews shared that in their community a Head Start teacher acquired her bachelor's degree. In addition, they have similar challenges as other tribes in terms of broadband and transportation issues, and suggested approaching Johns Hopkins to develop a program for early childhood professionals and working together with other tribes to address the similar needs.
- Ak-Chin Indian Community Vice Chairman Gabriel Lopez shared there was an expansion of the early childhood program and they recently had a staff member complete her schooling to work with kids that have special needs, which is a great need in the community.
- Havasupai Tribe Councilwoman Carletta Tilousi stated they have two staff members from the community serving 15 families [through home visitation] and they receive assistance from a consultant who comes to the community to help manage the program and assist staff in taking online classes. She additionally mentioned that it is an asset when they are able to hire their own community members who have a strong cultural background. For example, in their community, they had a teacher who worked with the school for many years, moved to the Head Start program and assisted in creating a bilingual program.
- Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation Education Director Dr. Bill Myhr stated they have created a successful program in which some of their summer youth program interns work at the H'man 'Shawa Early Childhood Center. This has sparked the interest of some of their interns to work as aides at the early childhood center or for the home visitation program.

Cultural Responsivity to Support Early Childhood Professionals in Tribal Communities

- Navajo Nation OPVP Executive Assistant Yvonne Kee-Billison mentioned that there is a need for culturally relevant education across the entire spectrum of education. In addition, most early childhood funding comes from federal programs such as the Department of Health and Human Services and Administration for Children and Families, and the grants usually have funds for culturally relevant initiatives. The Growing in Beauty Curriculum, a Navajo curriculum, is used at the Head Start and Indian Health Service programs and there is a need to utilize it in other programs across the Nation for continuity. Ms. Billison also mentioned that there is a need to incorporate native language in early language settings and create programs that can infuse it. She encouraged FTF to consider [funding] this not only regionally, but statewide. In addition, she suggested an intertribal early childhood summit be convened to bring together system partners, federal and state, including Indian Health Services, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior and Bureau of Indian Education to discuss needs such as mental health training, professional development and technical assistance.
- Ak-Chin Indian Community Vice Chairman Gabriel Lopez shared that cultural and traditional practices are the foundation for their students and kids, and it is up to parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles to teach those, especially to younger parents that may not know the cultural and traditional practices. Also, as O'odham people when a baby is born, they are taken to the medicine people and are traditionally blessed and cleansed for a better life. He additionally shared that at their Head Start, there were some incidents happening and they didn't know why;

a medicine person came and told them what was going on and that those are some of the things leaders need to be cognizant of.

- Havasupai Tribe Councilwoman Carletta Tilousi shared that one of the successes they have seen over time in their collaboration with FTF is changing the name of the program funded in their community to their own language to ensure a more cultural approach. She additionally mentioned that while there has not been a curriculum developed which incorporates their early childhood traditions or cultural practices, staff members know and share those practices with others, and that FTF programs should encourage that as well as Western methods, especially in professional development. She also stated that in their community, since they are in a remote location, they need access to computers, internet, technical skills and technical support.
- Hualapai Tribe Councilwoman Jonell Tapija agreed with the suggestion for an intertribal early childhood summit and suggested a Tribal FTF summit be held for the tribal entities, especially because not a lot of the professionals come from tribes or reservations, and it would be a great opportunity to also bring their cultural people to share values and traditions.

Successes and Challenges with the First Things First Registry and Scholarships for Early Childhood Professionals

- Hualapai Tribe Councilwoman Jonell Tapija stated there are tribal scholarships and that many of their teachers are utilizing the tribal scholarship or the FTF scholarship to acquire their CDAs or associate degrees.
- Navajo Nation OPVP Executive Assistant Yvonne Kee-Billison stated that 391 childhood professionals on the Navajo Nation are utilizing the registry, and that they have several success stories, including one individual that was able to obtain their bachelor's degree in early childhood. She also mentioned they are focusing on addressing mental health issues for young children. An additional challenge mentioned was communication between the Navajo Nation Scholarship Office, tribal colleges and universities in terms of degrees the Nation isn't aware of (therefore, not covered by the scholarship).
- Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer stated that coming from a business background, he would definitely be an advocate for early childhood and bring it into a larger discussion in regards to Indian Nations. He added that there was a need to create capacity and understanding for first nations people to really see the need to examine and raise the bar of what is being done in regards to early childhood development, especially knowing investments in early childhood today will be seen twenty years down the road. He also said there is a need to create more professionals in the field.
- Gila River Indian Community Tribal Education Director Isaac Salcido stated there are four separate Head Start programs and a child care center on the community participating in Quality First. Quality First participants have access to trainings that are not available to other centers on the community who are not in Quality First. He is interested in having other centers participate in the trainings and would like to discuss it further.

- Pascua Yaqui Tribe Education Director Dr. Ann Parker shared that some of the home providers try to access the registry for training opportunities but because they do not have their DES license there are many trainings not available to them. Also, in addition to challenges with connectivity, sometimes staff forget their PIN number and cannot access the registry.
- Navajo Nation OPVP Executive Assistant Yvonne Kee-Billison mentioned that she would like to see more tribal data relating to the usage of the registry. In addition, she stated there may be an opportunity to work with Job Corp to establish an early childhood education track, like they have for nursing.
- Hualapai Tribe Councilwoman Jonell Tapija stated she is not sure if their Head Start or child care center staff are utilizing the registry, but she imagines that if the staff are utilizing the registry, they might be encountering the same issues as other tribes, such as losing passwords, being too busy to take trainings and not updating their plans.
- Havasupai Tribe Councilwoman Carletta Tilousi shared that her staff are using the registry, and that their main complaint is the time required to upload all required documents to their records. She also agreed there needs to be more coordination amongst system partners.

Opportunities to Enhance Coordination to Support Early Childhood Professionals

- White Mountain Apache Tribe Vice Chairman Jerome Kasey III expressed the need to have more collaboration, education and open communication between their Tribe and FTF, and wondered how the tribe could take more ownership of FTF funded programs. He looks forward to future meetings with the newly hired Regional Director.
- Navajo Nation OPVP Executive Assistant Yvonne Kee-Billison shared how collaboration with colleges and universities has expanded professionals, for example John Hopkins worked with Ganado to develop a program to address the need for nurses, and believes there is an opportunity to develop this type of program for early childhood professionals. In addition, in many of their public schools they have CTE programs for vocational programs, such as nursing or welding, and she wondered if it would be possible to connect with the Arizona Department of Education to infuse some early childhood education into CTE programs across the State of Arizona.
- Gila River Indian Community Tribal Education Director Isaac Salcido agreed with the statement by Ms. Kee-Billison and shared that the community invests a lot of money on K-12 and higher education and he would like to see regional councils work more closely with the tribal education departments to increase kindergarten readiness as well as bring together the agencies that are working on early childhood to focus on a specific goal relating to early childhood. In addition, he stated he is interested in developing a competency-based training program for entry-level early childhood professionals that can be coordinated with input from tribes.
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe Education Director Dr. Ann Parker shared that there is opportunity to enhance collaboration amongst agencies and that she and other staff are interested in participating in FTF and Head Start trainings.

- Hualapai Tribe Councilwoman Jonell Tapija shared there are opportunities to recognize early childhood professionals through a ceremony or dinner because they often go unnoticed.
- Ak-Chin Indian Community Vice Chairman Gabriel Lopez emphasized that teachers are like second parents. They are the ones that set the foundation for a lifetime, and there needs to be a way to better appreciate all that they do, especially since those positions are not well appreciated. He also shared that they have an employee recognition day, and while that is something small, it is well needed. He also encouraged the use of tribal newspapers or websites to recognize early childhood professionals.
- Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Acting Superintendent Dr. Cynthia Clary shared that every employee in their school district can participate in professional development trainings. Twice a month, kids have early release which allows staff to receive professional development such as trauma-informed trainings. In addition, they amended their discipline matrix to include counseling at every level when a child is misbehaving to ensure they are addressing mental health, social well-being and spiritual aspects. When a child misbehaves, it is explained how they have violated the community values and elders help guide the process. Lastly, she mentioned that the community pays for community members to get three terminal degrees.

Supporting and Tracking Early Childhood Professionals in Tribal Communities

- Pascua Yaqui Tribe Education Director Dr. Ann Parker shared that Tribal Council requested the development of a new personnel evaluation system for government employees which would require that all staff, including Head Start staff, have professional development goals in place such as attending conferences, increasing skills in Excel, getting degrees, etc.
- Navajo Nation OPVP Executive Assistant Yvonne Kee-Billison acknowledged the FTF social media campaigns which help to promote what FTF is about, and appreciated the recognition ideas that were shared by other tribes. She also was aware that there are many Native American students at universities and colleges and wonders if students, especially in the early childhood field, intend to return to their tribal communities to work, and if they do, how could tribes work with agencies such as CCDF to assist.

Additional Insight and Perspectives shared by Tribal Leaders and Representatives

- Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer and Executive Assistant Yvonne Kee-Billison asked how FTF works with the Arizona Department of Education to provide technical assistance or educational opportunities to early childhood professionals. Ms. Kee-Billison additionally added that for a very long time, education has always been about K-12 and higher, but we need to start talking about education a lot earlier and the education system needs to take that into consideration. Ms. Kee-Billison further elaborated that in tribal communities there are many Bureau of Indian Education schools which have few, if any, classrooms devoted to early childhood education, and that including them in these conversations would be beneficial for young children.