

## **Topic 7 – Advocating for Early Childhood Development in AIAN Communities**

### *Examples of success in advocating for early childhood development in AIAN communities*

Key ideas: Support and develop opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing around advocacy, brain research, family engagement, Tribal Council engagement, etc.

- Language Curriculum Kits: Minnesota Tribal Resources for Early Childhood Care (MnTRECC) developed language curriculum kits for Ojibwe and Lakota/Dakota that are available for all Minnesota tribes, schools, Indian Education, and Native language revitalization advocates. While the kits are produced for preschool to age 8, they are a great resource for all ages and can serve as a great supplement to any language learning initiative.
- Having convenings like this conference helps.
- Broaden Montessori and American Indian community partnerships.
- Get creative with available resources.
- With language immersion efforts, use a trial and error approach, learn while doing.
- Tribal Child Care Awareness Day in Las Vegas and three other communities in Nevada. Goal: Make this statewide then maybe regional to show the importance of early childhood development.
- Use social media to reach families and stakeholders.
- Leech Lake is working on getting out in communities, particularly in remote rural areas and doing more with parents, including literacy events where they bring in speakers about brain development and give families books (every family should have books).
- MnTRECC holds quarterly meetings with tribal representatives in the state. Helps coordinate trainings and programs across tribal communities and is a forum to share best practices.
- National Indian Child Care Association advocates for CCDF grantees who are NICCA members.

### *Barriers to making early childhood development a top priority in AIAN communities*

- American Indians are the last in research; not enough research.
- With so many needs, how to decide what to fund?
- Everyone in Native communities is fighting for the same piece of the pie (funding).
- Hard to advocate with families because they have busy lives. And it is hard to advocate for the future when they are just trying to survive today.
- Legislative knowledge – figuring out how to navigate the legislative process.
- When tribe is involved, can't hire or fire staff.
- Getting tribes on board.

- Building relationships.
- Accessing funding.
- Quality teachers (training).
- Poor structures (referring to physical buildings?).
- Changes in tribal councils – turnover affects programs. It is also a reason it can be difficult to engage tribal council members.
- Stability.
- Non-tribal programs serving tribes; they can lack knowledge and sensitivity to culture and language issues.
- State governments that don't work with tribes.

*How communities can address those barriers*

Key ideas: Key ideas: Develop and promote civic engagement and how it affects tribal families and communities. Get information to AIAN families on how specific policy and legislative issues affect them. Ask Tribal Council members for support in legislative issues. It is important to have personal relationships with Tribal Council members to keep them up-to-date on EC issues and develop trust. Examples: Develop talking points that ECD advocates or parents can provide Tribal Councils. Create a clearinghouse for position papers on ECD from Tribal Communities.

- Just start, don't let fear take over, it's okay to make mistakes, but go forward.
- Document success stories and the process.
- Getting stakeholders to the communities.
- Look at existing resources. Breakdown silos and work across different sectors, agencies, and organizations.
- Grant opportunities seem to want to hear the worst story.
- Need more American Indian people in political and other systems.
- Educate and elevate awareness in the tribe/community about investing in the early years, including child care.
- Expand tribal child care awareness day across states and regions, even Nationwide Tribal Child Care Awareness.
- Increase awareness about brain development science.
- Build relationships.
- More infrastructure funding for communities.
- Find unexpected advocates to speak on behalf of investing in young children.
- Engage in conversations and other ways to disseminate information about the importance of birth to age 3.

- Have a clearinghouse for position papers from tribal communities.
- Develop funding for national gatherings.
- Develop strategies on following through regarding quality initiatives after funding runs out – sustainability.

*Additional research or materials needed to better advocate for early childhood development in AIAN communities*

Key ideas: Immerse tribal communities and Tribal Councils with ECD information (once they understand the information, they become advocates). Then provide resources or opportunities for advocacy work or recommendations/assistance for sustainability.

- Keep tribal leaders updated and informed about early childhood development activities.
- Data systems.
- Start to tell stories and weave in more stories.
- More research regarding early childhood development in tribal communities, as K-12 has more.
- Build a team of people to get information out.
- Develop collaborations regionally.
- Develop strategies for follow-through after funding ends.