

Shaping the Future of Indigenous Early Learning: A Visioning Workshop for Investment in Native American Early Childhood Education

Meeting co-hosted by the American Indian College Fund and Center for Indian Country Development at the *Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis*

May 15, 2019

2:00pm **Reflective Discussion & Call to Action:**

Workshop participants engaged in interactive discussion building upon National to local context of work in early childhood development and education. Table discussions were facilitated by partners from foundations, drawing attention to next steps. Compiled notes below provide an overview of the ideas generated during this session.

Foundation discussion leads:

Dr. Frank Gettridge, W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Andreas Hipple, Better Way Foundation

Dr. Joe Graham, Native American Agriculture Fund

Dr. John Jackson, Schott Foundation for Public Education

Dr. John Jackson's Table:

- What inspired you?
 - o Resounding strength across TCUs' work of community integration
- Questions/What was missing from conversations?
 - o How do the drops of wisdom we heard today and improving practices in ECE look in entire system – how big is the impact?
 - o How to balance meeting the needs of individuals vs. entire communities?
 - o Funding is needed for ECE leaders to not only travel to these types of convenings, but specifically to compensate for their time as most are working-class and may not be able afford taking time away from work.
 - o There is a lack of researchers in Indian Country, and thus gathering data evidence is a challenge for ECE programs.
 - o How can we create financial/funding stability through a means that is not influenced by the governmental/federal administration of the time?
 - o There is too much emphasis by funders on urban populations, which puts Native communities primarily located in rural areas at disadvantage
- Next steps in 3-6 months?
 - o Creation of databases or other means of sharing so people can learn what other Native communities are doing in ECE
 - o More webinars, conventions, etc. that bring people together to spark solutions to problems

- Creation of space for tribal communities to connect with each other and other communities to bring more Native scholars' voices from tribal colleges to table regarding education
- Donors Choose-type platform, so a funder can see a specific issue in ECE and say 'I want to fund/support that specific program/project'
- Identify foundations willing to take the risk and be early champions of change

Dr. Frank Gettridge's Table

- What inspired you?
 - The stories of success in Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU) directors' work. It seemed the roadblocks often heard in higher education stories were not present in the TCUs' work
 - Engaging with ECE/TCU faculty
 - Hearing success of partnerships and knowing the work shouldn't have to be funded by just one foundation
- Questions/What was missing from conversations?
 - Is there support for classroom instruction development? Support for teachers to bridge gaps between state mandated curriculum requirements and teacher/classroom instruction development?
 - Are there opportunities for ECE teachers to work in career pathways in other public education settings?
 - Policy change: Expand work to more ECE education systems and communities (Ex: There are not a lot of tribally controlled public schools)
 - How do you change the hearts and minds of people who do not have foundational knowledge of Tribal communities? This will be necessary to engage the people and foundations that would fund these areas.
- Next steps in 3-6 months?
 - Identify key groups or people that we need to communicate with who would impact or affect policy.
 - Integrate data into storytelling and research
 - Start developing American Indian Alaska Native Young Scholars program in early childhood development and education

Dr. Joe Graham's Table

- What inspired you?
 - The opportunity to visit with other site directors and see the creativity and innovation abounding in our work
 - Everything! It's hard to pick just one thing. All the projects are so unique to the communities they serve.
 - Inspiration to take action: I do wonder about teacher pipelines, teacher development, and getting people back to their communities.
 - Inspiration to take action: Seeing the projects as catalysts for knowledge purveyors of community-based knowledge to influence the education of our children and that the projects are ecosystem appropriate. I'm a scientist, so I speak in terms of ecosystems. I

- also wonder about how we can influence the structural barriers that are preventing the creative solutions we have in our communities from getting the investment they deserve.
- Hard and interesting questions are helping me to think about some things differently and are helping form new thinking around interview questions in my work.
 - The economic and social data that Rob Grunewald provided was powerful.
 - Questions/What was missing from conversations?
 - How do we help early childhood development/education staff analyze program locally?
 - How do we secure scholarships for ECE and Elementary Education?
 - How do we support the next generation of Native teachers to go back to their communities and teach?
 - How do we think more from an interdisciplinary approach from a funding perspective? In communities of scarcity, can we approach things differently? For example, not thinking of different investment interests as separate from ECE but as a part of ECE, part of surviving, part of sustainability.
 - Next steps in 3-6 months?
 - There should be a broader focus on investment focusing on early childhood development
 - We're already committed to education, specifically early education. We just began supporting the American Indian College Fund and from what we've seen today, we definitely want to continue to do so.
 - Share various parts of contents could be offered via web so that could be taken to people at their convenience. *(Note: all presentations and summary notes will be posted to the Center for Indian Country Development)*

Andreas Hipple's Table

- What inspired you?
 - Vast amount of available information to support knowledge and learning
 - Learning how STEM and Native languages are woven into curriculum, and how this connects with administration and experiential learning
 - Learning how all forms of education are being indigenized and all cross-learning opportunities that can expand up and out, working up from TCUs to community to society at large
 - The work that is addressing challenges of inspiring administration to support early childhood development programming.
 - The efforts to connect with and engage families that come from so many different backgrounds and challenges
- Questions/What was missing from conversations?
 - How to address the need of data collection and the need to share resources?
 - How to engage tribal members from historically different tribes, languages, and culture to come together with goal of improving early childhood development
 - Is there an opportunity to work within state/governments to increase support across the sector?

- Making sure people (teachers, students) know they can be unashamedly Native and participate in their culture's learnings
- Next steps in 3-6 months?
 - Maintain connections with participants
 - Follow up with references and networks, and share work with other TCUs and ECE programs
 - More funder focus on promoting success stories and impact of programming
 - Create opportunities to bring family members and students to demonstrate impact and share success
 - Developing an inventory/map of best practices and resources across spectrums and the country; joining efforts, utilizing what others have learned, what accomplishments have been made within multiple systems and levels

Regrouping: Summary Report Out

- How do we reach more individuals?
 - Resounding answer: Bring more tribal voices and funders to the table
 - More convenings so crucial voices are constantly being heard
 - More researchers willing to listen and take risk of mistakes – learning in collaboration
- Next Steps?
 - Finding foundations willing to take risk to be early learners and champions
 - Creating additional platforms. Databases, Donors choose programming
 - Educating funders who need to understand the community in order to understand and meet their needs

