

Diverse Voices in Education Research: Leveraging Native American and Alaska Native Voices in Education Research

Institute of Education Sciences U.S. Department of Education

White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence,
and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening
Tribal Colleges and Universities

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Transcript

*Transcription is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a
totally verbatim record of the proceedings.*

[Title Slide / Slide 2]

Meredith Larson:

My name is Meredith Larson, and I work at the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. And I just want to thank you all for joining us today for our Diverse Voices in Education Research series: "Leveraging Native American and Alaska Native Voices in Education Research."

Co-hosted or co-sponsored by the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities.

[Agenda / Slide 3]

Meredith Larson: Today, we will, of course, welcome you. We will have some opening remarks from Ron if we can get him on the phone, followed by a panel discussion, and then an open question-and-answer session and open discussion.

[Welcome / Slide 5]

Meredith Larson: So, Ron, we are now on the Welcome slide. If you would like to start by introducing yourself.

Ron Lessard: I sure will. I apologize for the delay. We're working on this, so I had to call in. So hello, everyone. My name is Ron Lessard. I am Mohawk. I'm the acting executive director for the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities.

And I would like to thank you all for joining us today. I think you'll find this a very exciting panel and looking forward to your questions and your insight and your responses. So, with that, I'd like to go back to Meredith, is that correct?

Meredith Larson: Yes, it is. Good memory for the slides. So again, my name is Meredith Larson, and I just want to thank everybody for signing in today and joining us for this listening session. Your presence is, it's just a joy to have you here. And we're honored to be able to share this time with you.

I also want to personally thank Dr. Katina Stapleton for championing IES's efforts with diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, for acting director Lessard for his lifetime of service and his great help in planning this meeting, for Jamie Deaton, another IES colleague who has been a great partner and advocate throughout this entire process, and our commissioners, Liz Albro from NCER, Joan McLaughlin from NCSEER, and Anne Ricciuti.

We wouldn't be here today if it weren't for all of these people and countless others, including our wonderful panelists, who you will meet very shortly. And now, I'd like to turn this back to Ron, who will tell us a little bit about the White House Initiative. Let me get that slide up.

[White House Initiative / Slide 6]

Ron Lessard: Thank you, Meredith, and thank you, everyone, again for joining. Hopefully, I'll be joining you virtually where we can see each other soon. So the White House Initiative – it's really important to know that this started originally, the White House Initiative started back actually in the Clinton administration as the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities.

And from there, it went to, under the Obama administration to the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, now to where we are today under this present, under the president Biden/Harris and Vice President Harris who signed the executive order on October 11th, which was Indigenous People's Day.

So that was very significant. But also was significant to continue the effort and to continue the importance and relevance of supporting Native students

wherever they are. So the White House Initiative not only, not only elevates the initiative office, but it elevates the advisory committee NACIE, which is also Native American, a national advisory council on Indian education.

So it elevates that to a point where there'll be lots of activity, and support, and advice coming from the advisory council. So, Meredith, just checking how much you want me to say before we go, and I can add more when we get to the context.

Meredith Larson: Yeah. Why don't we wait, and we'll just have more in the context if that's okay?

Ron Lessard: That's what I'm trying to get in now and then hopefully I will.

Meredith Larson: Okay, wonderful. Thank you, Ron.

Ron Lessard: Thanks.

[Map and Land Acknowledgement / Slide 7]

Meredith Larson: And before we begin telling you a little bit about IES and what guided us to this conversation today, I wanted to pause, to take a moment to acknowledge that we gather here today, each of us in different places, but all of us on a land that sustains and connects us and each of us in a community with a deep knowledge and vibrant possibilities. This map shows the traditional territories of Native American and Alaska Native nations.

And I want to share this to remind us of the diversity this land sustains and to help us understand the scope of learning that we need to do and the variety of voices we at IES need to hear. Though we may differ in where we are or in what we do, we are all related in our desire to create space and opportunity for students.

[IES Diversity Statement / Slide 8]

Meredith Larson: Today, we open up this space to listening and sharing so that we can realize IES's diversity statement shared here. I know it's a little long. You can read it online if you would like. But really, we need your help.

We need to understand how best to support Native American and Alaska Native students and communities.

We can't make progress or provide help without first learning about the directions people are already heading in or want to head. Good answers come by first fully listening to the questions and ideas of others. And so we want to start with a very short overview of what IES is, and what we have been doing, and what we could be doing to help give you a sense of why we reached out to hear your stories.

[IES Homepage / Slide 9]

Meredith Larson: And so first, just a minute or two about IES. IES is the nonpolitical, independent research arm at the U.S. Department of Education. We provide an evidence base to inform education policy and practice. We do this through a myriad of activities, performed by different centers as listed here, NCER, NCES, NCEE, and NCSE.

You can read more about our structure and our mission online, and we'll put a link into the chat if you want to open [inaudible]. In brief, however, our main task in collecting and sharing survey and assessment data through NCES, conducting national evaluations and providing regional and technical assistance through NCEE, and supporting field-initiated research through grants and contracts at NCER and NCSE.

To date, IES has not built a large portfolio of research specific to Native American or Alaska Native students. Though over the years, IES has supported regional education laboratories, or RELs, that have done work to understand and support the needs of Native American communities. And IES has conducted surveys with a focus on Native American students. We know that we could be doing more. To give an example of IES's work to date with Indigenous communities, I'd like my colleague, Dr. Jamie Deaton to briefly introduce the work of NCES. Jamie?

[NAEP and NIES / Slide 10]

James Deaton: Thank you very much. And thank you, Ron and Meredith, for inviting me to this wonderful session today. I'm really looking forward to

listening and learning from today's panelists. In that spirit, I'm going to keep my remarks very brief. I work for the National Center for Education Statistics, which is located within IES. For the last 12 years, I've had the honor and privilege of serving as the project director for the National Indian Education Study.

This study serves as the largest nationally representative data collection of American Indian and Alaska Native students. It is conducted through the National Assessment of Educational Progress, also called NAEP for short. There are two main components to NIES. The first being the NAEP reading and mathematics assessment at Grades 4 and 8 and an NIES-specific survey, given to students, their teachers, and school administrators.

To give you some background, NAEP was first administered in 1969. And American Indian and Alaska Native students have always been part of the NAEP sample. However, what NIES allowed us to do is enhance and expand reporting for American Indian and Alaska Native students.

Within NCES reports, when there is not enough of a sample to report on a given subgroup, you will often see a dash instead. A recent area of focus at NCES, not just for NAEP or NIES, but rather center-wide, has been whenever possible, replacing those dashes with data. And there's a connection between this effort and the event today. When we have a dash, there's a data point we don't know, and we have to ask ourselves, "Can we revise our sampling and data collection approach to get back to data?"

In recent years, I've seen multiple instances where the answer is, yes. So in that spirit of getting more American Indian and Alaska Native specific data, let's go to the next slide where Meredith will be outlining ideas at the research grant centers.

Meredith Larson: Thank you, Jamie.

[Possible Changes / Slide 11]

Meredith Larson: So yes, NCES has been working very hard with the Native American/Alaska Native communities, but there are other places where we can

do better. And that one high area of interest is our field-initiated research. So, as I mentioned, we have two research grant-making centers: NCER and NCSEER.

These centers can provide funding for exploratory, development, evaluation, and other projects to help improve outcomes for all students, including those with or at risk for disabilities. This is a place where new questions can come up and be addressed. Over the past nearly 20 years, only 4 out of over 2100 grants from these 2 centers have clearly focused on Indigenous students.

That's less than 0.2% of all of our grants. The most recent of these grants was funded in 2014. We know that there's innovation and exploration happening. We know that Native American and Alaska Native students, their educators, their families, and their communities have questions and are finding the answers.

But we are unsure of how we can support these efforts. Our conversations with others have led us to a few ideas such as these. But before we propose solutions, we want to understand what you're interested in and what you would like.

This will help us think through how our current structure aligns to support those interests. We know that there is no single voice or a single question or solution. But with your help, we can start to build a better understanding. And on that note, I would like to re-introduce Ron, the acting director, who will give us some opening remarks about Native American education in the United States.

[Setting the Context / Slide 12]

Meredith Larson: Ron, are you still on the line with us? Think you might be muted because I think I see your phone. And while we're getting Ron, please, feel free to put in questions, ideas into the chat or the Q and A.

Ron Lessard: I am here.

Meredith Larson: Wonderful. Ron, can you give us a little context for our conversation today, please?

Ron Lessard: So, yes, I do want to give a little context for a few minutes about American Indian and Alaska Native education.

And to put it in perspective, you know, we have these executive orders that go back many years, but really the trust, responsibility, and the reason we have Indian education goes back to our treaties.

So, you know, our treaties, the treaties are with the federal government in exchange for land or commerce, and many other issues, why tribes entered into treaties. But one of the main issues, that was an exchange was for land or commerce was the education of Native children and very important that, forever, that federal government responsibility, under the Trust Responsibility treaties, through these treaties was to provide education, as well as healthcare, in many cases and other things that are listed in the treaties.

There were over 300 treaties with the federal government and tribes. So there are 574 federally recognized tribes. And there are many state tribes and also some non-recognized tribes as well. To put other things into context, as far as our students, the Bureau of Indian Education, which is in the Department of Interior under the Bureau of Indian Affairs, only represent about 8% of all Native students.

So that other 92% is public, private schools, charter schools, parochial schools, and throughout the country. But I must say that the 8% of Native students in the Bureau of Indian Education system – it's very important. There are 183 schools throughout 23 states. There's approximately 48,000 American Indian students.

So they play a very large role, especially on the reservations. So off-reservation is when you find that the public schools, private schools, charter schools. And there are some public schools on reservations as well. Also, I want to mention that, you know, in the higher ed sector, you know, and we work very closely with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, which is AIHEC, they represent the 37 tribal colleges throughout the country.

And, you know, tribal colleges, they operate more than 75 campuses in 16 states more than 250 of the federally recognized tribes are represented there. And they'd probably say the key to the tribal colleges and universities is that the promotion of tribal identity, and culture, and traditions. So a young Native student can carry that from their community into college. And it's a very important bridge to education, then also very important to their life learning

because they've been going to a school that's been set up to work with Native students.

The other thing I want to mention is that I also serve as the tribal consultation official in the Department of Education and serve on the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children. And this is a commission that was mandated by Congress. We'll be doing a report coming up in another year or so, but we're conducting hearings throughout the country to hear from Native students and from practitioners and experts in the field.

So there's a lot of effort going on around education, Indian education, going back to the treaties on up to today to this webinar. And I'll leave it at that and certainly, can answer any questions if you would like. Meredith, I'll bring it back to you.

Meredith Larson: Thank you, Ron. And thank you for the numbers and the context.

[Today's Panelists / Slide 13]

Meredith Larson: And with that, we're going to turn to our four panelists today. Each of them comes from a different background in terms of, like, their roles. And we have three questions for them, and we'll just do a little round-robin. So if our speakers can turn on their cameras, please.

And we'll be hearing from Ace Charette, Steph Fryberg, Lisa Martin, and Erica Moore.

[End Slide Show / Slide 14]

Meredith Larson: Okay. And let's just go ahead with our first question. And our first question is, so panelists if you could, please, introduce yourself, and your role, and reflect on what Indigenous education means for you to help researchers and IES learn a little bit more about you and some of the ideas that people have.

And let's start with Ace and then we'll move to Steph.

Ace Charette: Thank you, Meredith. *Miigwech*. [Self-introduction in Ojibwe language] My name is Ace Charette. I'm the director of research assessment accreditation at Turtle Mountain Community College.

In a nutshell, what this means is that I am an institutional researcher within a tribal system of higher education, a tribal organization of higher education I should say. My work ranges from pre-entry data from the students at the high school level and the demographic level all the way to postgraduate information, such as placement, employment, or transfer, and many, many data points in between, of course, as they make their way through the institution.

Institutional research professionals, I believe offer a rich source of information that can support and inform critical research processes. And there's a lot of reasons for this. One is that we, as I just mentioned, have a lot of information and data at our fingertips. But another is that we are connected to numerous internal processes within our organizations of higher education. So I think that makes us kind of on that, you know, we straddle the line between research and practitioner. So I think we offer a lot of value in that way.

In that role, you know, we are tied to a variety of success initiatives ranging from really granular stuff like SEM decisions, all the way up to, strategic enrollment management decisions, I should say, all the way up to strategic planning for the institution and some things that are really creative and diverse between and outside of those things.

What Indigenous education means to me, again, in a nutshell, this is a very, very big question, and I think there's a lot to talk about there. But in a nutshell, it means application of traditional values and worldviews within spaces of education but especially those that are serving Native Indigenous students.

This supports a healthier Indigenous student overall when the environment is reflexive and respondent to the Indigenous nature of the learners within that space. And these values can be embedded in virtually any system and organization. In a higher education world, that could mean, you know, embedded values in the strategic enrollment management process that includes student support services, recruitment, retention, placement, and virtually any other department across campus.

Student learning systems, student assessment of student learning is another way that can be expressed. So kind of putting that in again in sum is that, to me, Indigenous education means that the institution cares for the student, and it's willing to structure itself to reflect that care. The community, I believe, educates the student, and the student is not left to him or herself to educate themselves alone.

So the community piece has to be in the mix there. So with that, I'll turn it back over to Meredith to introduce the next panelist. Thank you.

Meredith Larson: Thank you, Ace. We'll hear from Steph and then Lisa, please.

Steph Fryberg: Hello. I'm Steph Fryberg, and I'm a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan. I'm also the founding director of the new Research for Indigenous Social Action and Equity Center also at Michigan. I'm a member of the Tulalip Tribes of Washington state and am currently on my tribal homelands.

So my work has two relevant angles that I want to share today. So my research team has been trying to understand the ways in which Native omission or invisibility and misrepresentation influence self and identity development for Native students, contributes to educational inequality, undermines belonging, motivation, and performance for our students, and reifies inequality by minimizing the ongoing colonization, discrimination, and racism contemporary Native people experience.

In addition, we've been working with six school districts to develop a curriculum for creating identity-safe classrooms for students. The curriculum was initially created for Native students but proved to be effective for all students. Given that, we've been testing the curriculum and identifying specific cultural practices educators can use to enhance the learning environment for all students, but in particular for low-income, Indigenous, and minoritized students.

In terms of what Indigenous education means to me, it's very much about creating space in education where Indigenous people can be fully Indigenous. Where we can embrace our roles, relationships, and responsibilities to our

families, communities, and to the natural world, where we can be fully human. Where our emotions, motivations, and spiritual connections are valued and reflect new knowledge generation. Where we are seen. And by that, I really mean, like, we are visible. Where we can reclaim our truths as opposed to the lies and romantic narratives reified in children's school textbooks.

And so I guess, in a nutshell, for me, it's very much about centering Indigenous knowledge. And I'll stop there.

Meredith Larson: Thank you. Lisa?

Lisa Martin: Sure. [Self-introduction in Ojibwe language] Hi, everybody. My name is Lisa Martin. I am Ojibwe, Ojibwe Nation, member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. I'm a senior research associate at the Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health. And I work with the Family Spirit curriculum team at the center.

Family Spirit is an evidence-based home-visiting curriculum that's been developed by and for Native communities for pregnant mothers and families with children age 0 to 3. So we're currently expanding our lesson content to target families with children ages 3 to 5.

And prior to my work at the center, I worked at the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, where we developed a 3 to 5 early learning focus supplement to the Family Spirit curriculum. So I anticipate that that work is going to be building upon each other. Family Spirit has continually received requests for home visiting content for children ages 3 to 5.

The work at Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan was also in response to an identified need to target this age group with early learning support. And so that's just a very little bit about me and a little bit about my current role at the center.

When I think about what Indigenous education means to me, I really think of the idea that what and how we learn is reflected in our traditions and our language. And our culture and our language are where healing happen. And so I believe that optimal Indigenous education acknowledges, respects, and grounds education in those ideas. So when we look at it from the frame of early

learning, in that space, parents, caregivers, elders, and extended families are the children's first and most important teachers.

And so healing and learning happen for both parents and children when we are approaching early learning in this way. And I really feel like there's such a need for healing for Indigenous people within education systems. And I also really believe that the answers are found in grounding education approaches, assessments, frameworks, and interventions in the culture and language of communities.

So I also think that, given where I'm working in the 0 to 5 age group, that it could be, but our panelists have mentioned the importance for this easier to think of education and its connections to language and culture, but I would also challenge as mentioned by our panelists, that this is just as important as an individual moves through older age categories – that those connections to language and culture are there for anybody who is participating in education. So that's my perspective. Thank you for the opportunity to be here and respond, and I'll turn it back to you, Meredith.

Meredith Larson: Thank you. Erica?

Erica Moore: [Self-introduction in Arawakan Taíno language]. A member of the United Confederation of Taíno People. My name is Erica Moore. I am the executive director of Native Students Success at AIHEC, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. There, as mentioned previously by Ron, we oversee the advocacy for the 37 tribal colleges.

But we also find research and data obviously really important to that mission. So I oversee the research team and the data team, and we work really closely with the research committee, the presidents of the TCUs to sort of move through what this research agenda will look like for the TCUs.

We focus on strength-based areas. We don't focus on a deficit, so we encourage research that's going to uplift in like the health fields, in professional development for faculty. Now with the trend moving toward online and virtual education, we're looking at the impacts of COVID on our students and staff and what that can look like moving forward, and how AIHEC could assist in programmatic or initiatives that will produce positive results in those areas.

What Indigenous education means to me: you know, we're still here and so are our children. And so education of our children is still really important. And I think it's really important to understand that Indigenous ways of educating have existed long before the implementation of the education systems that we know now, Indigenous ways of learning, teaching existed within the whole community, and each member of that community had a role in how we educated our children and the lessons that they learned. They learned something from each person, not just one person.

And that included all of our language, our traditions, just our way of life. And I think the more mainstream institutions can incorporate and integrate those things into their campuses and ensure that their campuses are being culturally responsive, welcoming, and educating the campus to support our students the best way I think that's what Indigenous education is to me.

That people are still aware that we exist and that we should be able to exist as ourselves on any campus across. Thank you.

Meredith Larson: Okay. So for our second question, we can start with a volunteer from one of our panelists. So Erica, Lisa, Ace, or Steph, if one of you wants to volunteer to go first on the next question.

The next question we have is, how can education research support educational equity, excellence, and economic opportunity for Native students? So what do you see as the potential role? And if somebody wants to just raise her or his hand, just start with that, that'd be fabulous.

So the panelists Lisa, Erica, Steph, or Ace, or do you want me just to choose? Okay. I see Lisa with a big smile, and she does have early learning, so let's start with the children.

What do the children need? Economic excellence or, what was it, excellence, equity, and economic opportunity? What do children need?

Lisa Martin: All right, thank you, Meredith. Well, I guess if I respond now, I won't be so nervous going forward, so I'm happy to do that. So thank you. Yeah. So we know in our field of home visiting that so much happens to children that affect their development when their mother is pregnant, when

they're in utero. That can affect their education ultimately throughout their whole lifetime.

We also know that there's so much that can be done to support educational success from the moment they're born by supporting environments where they feel and are safe, is one example, by supporting parents and caregivers as their child's most important first educator is another. And we know that language, culture, and traditions, like I mentioned earlier, of communities are critical in supporting educational equity, excellence, and economic opportunity because they uphold values that prior to colonization created whole interconnected systems that supported healthy and vibrant communities.

And we all had a place and a role in those communities. Everybody did. And so our traditions recognize that what happens to our parents when we are in their womb, when we are born in very early years and throughout our childhood impacts our lives in the future from many perspectives. And so our education is included in that understanding. So our development of resources for parents of children and children age 3 to 5 was based on the need to create something that was rooted in the values of our communities because there were not resources that fit the need and the context of our communities that we worked in through home visiting.

And that was really, really important to us. In the work to develop the 3 to 5 supplement that focused on early learning, we didn't set out to create our own curricula. However, there were no materials available that we could take to use in our context that represented a statewide home visiting program at the time. And there's multiple layers of considerations that needed to be addressed before something could work.

And so, fortunately, we had an engaged partnership with our Head Start programs. And fortunately, that Head Start program had cultural and linguistic resources that we could use to create more targeted lessons. And fortunately, the office of Head Start did everything they could to support adaptation for these materials and processes for us to use in home visiting setting. So from that and other examples that we have, we know that working in silos does not maximize our work in supporting the development of families and children from the lens of promoting education.

I feel like our greatest strengths lie in partnerships and collaborations with communities directly, along with early education, childcare, in the public health sectors that we're working with, along with probably many other potential partners. The project that we worked on to address early learning with the 3 to 5 groups were informed by data collected from these partnerships.

The interventions were developed in collaboration through these partnerships, and the research and evaluation of the impact and outcomes were developed through these partnerships. And then the research outcomes were described through the partnerships. So those partnerships really helped us to indigenize the research process. Research questions, I feel like can and should be identified by Indigenous communities.

Some of our most successful and meaningful research was informed by a community-engaged process, which takes more time and probably more funding than research where numbers, access, and resources are not as much of an issue. And we're continually challenged to find assessments that provide meaningful information to our Indigenous communities at that age group.

I feel like any assessment important in education we should be identifying the relevance of the data to the community. And if needed, creating indigenized versions of assessments to gather information about specific outcomes. And there are some examples of this work happening now. It's happening out there. Funding criteria also need to be examined to understand what types of projects will be funded in an optimal way to meet the needs of community and research community rather than just the research community.

And I think that most Indigenous research methods books that I know of focus on qualitative data collection, and quantitative can be done. However, it's really important that there's an understanding from funders, that it's still important to accept research questions that might not, by definition, be generalizable to all communities. That doesn't mean the data and the processes are not useful, but there's a need to recognize that mixed methods research, for example, are able to tell stories about culture and tradition that are helpful and meaningful to the community.

And so they can document the richness of both what a culturally grounded intervention looks like and how it supports children's development. So I just will end by saying research in Indigenous communities can be really complex and multilayered, but it can and usually is equally rich and provide spaces where we can value different forms of knowledge.

In my opinion, there's just not a cookie-cutter approach for how it happens. So that's, I guess my response, Meredith. Thank you.

Meredith Larson: That was great. Thank you. Steph, would you like to go next or...

Steph Fryberg: Sure. I'm happy to. So I want to talk a bit about how some of the shifts that we've made in the education research we've been doing over the past couple of decades. And I think for a long time, we really were looking for interventions, ways of understanding what was happening in individual Native students, really feeling like maybe we can control less of the environment, but, you know, we can do more to, like, create safety for the individual student.

And over time, what we've come to realize is that, you know, the problem is not in the student, it's in the culture that's created for students. And so we have been working around a theory called "Culture Matching Theory," and with the understanding that when we help create matches for Native students, we fulfill a bunch of needs that are out there.

So one is, you know, we, often as adults, you know, we may learn to move between context, but when you are a child, you're coming out of your home environment, and what we often do in education is we treat mainstream cultural backgrounds where your parents have a college education, where you understand these mainstream ways of being, as a social privilege.

And we don't acknowledge the ways in which we have created an environment that advantages some and disadvantages others. And so in the work that we have done, we have really tried to first, pull apart the ideas, cultural norms, expectations of classrooms and schools, and really look at how they may be incongruent for Indigenous students.

And really not so much with the idea of saying, oh, this is how we need to change Native students, but to think more about how we work with teachers to help them create learning spaces that have more cultural matches. And so these interventions, then, that we have done in the last decade have been really taking the work from earlier, where we've identified the cultural needs, we've identified the ways in which matching can motivate and encourage Native students, and we've basically given them as a set of tools for teachers and building leaders to use.

And so we now would argue that interventions that target not just individual Native students but simultaneously the other levels of the school and classroom culture. So we think about the idea level, the institution level. So what are the rules that are there that support that institution? What are the interactions that are happening? And how do educators set up those interactions in ways that promote a positive learning environment for Native students?

And so, and I'm just going to give an example. I worked with my colleagues Anthony Craig, Kristen Dewitt, and we had this opportunity in my community to really rethink the entire learning environment for our students. And...

Steph Fryberg: All right. Okay. So what we did is we really tried to step back and ask a bigger question. What if we scrap everything we know that really hasn't worked for our children and really started to rebuild that classroom and school environment in a way that took into consideration cultural matching that really, like, we don't have the privilege of all of our teachers being Native?

And so right there, you really have to start, how do we give teachers a framework for them to move across environments? It's the situation we have. We have to really take advantage of, you know, giving teachers that toolkit to move across and build better classroom environments.

So we built the school around some pillars. One was these cultural relevance, but really looking at models of Indigenous self. So how do children learn to relate to be connected, to know their responsibilities, who are they responsible to, how do we tap up into our community values and really connect with the way that children have learned how to be, how to understand themselves, and how to relate to others?

And then the other is we had the opportunity to bring in Carol Dweck who wrote *Growth Mindset* and to really think about a cultural lens for growth mindset. So we created what we called a culturally inclusive growth mindset school. And so through this opportunity to really rethink the school, we really found that, one, it was tremendous to watch teachers' growth. And I say that initially because the teachers were the ones who had to make the changes, and ultimately what we saw was tremendous growth on the part of our students. Growth we had never seen before. And a lot of it really affirmed for me that this is, our children are ready to learn. And in many cases, we're just not approaching that learning environment in the right way.

And so we've really thought more about, how do we really advance this different cultural and learning environment? And what's interesting is 80% of the kids in the school were Native and 20% were not Native. And it turned out that the non-Native students advantaged more, even the White students in the school advantaged more from taking this culturally responsive approach.

And so, you know, what you see over time is that, you know, some of the barriers you run up against is leadership changes, and then that changes the school, teachers change.

But I think going forward, we've really come to realize that maybe the change needs to happen at a larger national level, that if we can really rethink how we train teachers, how we train building leaders, we've been working on developing a curriculum and really testing it at all levels so that as, you know, we've scaled up, so we've run with districts at the teacher level, we've run with districts at the building level, and just consistently we find that it's really good for low-income, Indigenous, and minority students.

And so why we keep holding to a model of education that really only works for some, to me, is the bigger intellectual and research question.

And I know the answer, but it's problematic that we continue to go down this path of privileging some and disadvantaging others. I'll stop there.

Meredith Larson: Thank you. Erica, would you like to follow up? You work with a lot of, sort of that leadership level.

Erica Moore: I think I'm going to take a slightly different approach. So I think oftentimes as Indigenous people, when we talk about some of the lived experiences, they're not valued across many forums because it's considered anecdotal, right? And so I feel like, naturally, research can help us as Indigenous peoples have supportive evidence in what we are saying is happening in our communities, within the tribal college systems, within mainstream systems.

We see that the mainstream way of thinking is data, data, data. We often try not to think of ourselves as a number, but we realize, realistically, we have to provide supportive evidence of what our needs are and how those outside of the community can assist us. So I think, first, that's why it's important.

I think, naturally, they go hand in hand. We should be including our lived experiences, speaking with the students, and getting their perspective because they are the center of the work that we do. But I think, also, when we're doing this work, this could also support data sovereignty. And so, for me, that's really important.

I don't think of sovereignty just in one linear way. Data sovereignty to me is, are the organizations that's coming to work with us as Indigenous people or in tribal communities or at TCUs or with our communities. I think someone's still not muted. If you are going into that work, are you starting off with reaching out to those individuals you want to work with and asking what type of research is needed in your community or at your tribal college?

Because oftentimes, we do see where very helpful, well-meaning organizations want to help, and they come to us after they already have a grant and they say, "I have this grant to work on roads." But this specific tribal community may want to focus on Indigenous health. So always starting that conversation is really important as researchers with the people that you want to collaborate with.

What are our needs? What do we want to focus on? And then are you including researchers in that work that you're doing – Indigenous researchers? Oftentimes within the historical context of this work that has been being done,

we are the subject of research, but not often included in the process of doing the work.

So I think that's a great way to focus on, you know, educational equity, excellence, and creating more opportunities. The more Indigenous people you speak with at the start of those projects that you include in those projects... And then really important, this is just really important to me personally, can't speak for everyone, but are you going back after collecting data and doing a form of member checking by asking those Indigenous people, "is this what you meant when you said this?" and not just putting your own interpretation out.

And then also who holds the data once it's collected? Who decides where it's disseminated? Are you providing the autonomy to those Indigenous people, students, staff, faculty, tribal community members the access to that data, and also the decision on who will get access to that data?

Many times, we want to build up the knowledge in our own communities about let's just say, indigenous plant life, but we don't necessarily want that shared across the entire spectrum. So those conversations are really important and the more you have us included in the work that you're trying to do or trying to accomplish, it's going to be ethically more appropriate and more inclusive and create equity across the board.

But I think, and then it's really important because if we're doing this work and we're doing the research, as I mentioned with the support of evidence, we're then able to help our communities gain access to grants, increase federal funding, create collaborations with TCUs and land grant institutions, for example.

And then just lastly, we are doing this work. There's so many. First, there's excellent Indigenous scholars that just spoke about the work that they're doing. And then if you look at the individual tribal colleges we have Salish Kootenai College, who created the Indigenous research center.

We see Sinte Gleska working on repatriating the Buffalo Nation. We see another organization is trying to repatriate the Hunkpapa war ponies in Standing Rock. So Thunder Valley and Oglala Lakota College doing excellent work in food, land, water. We're doing the work.

And it's not to say that we and/or don't welcome more help. We always want that. Just to be open to understanding and doing this in a culturally responsive way when working with Indigenous peoples is really important to research and ensuring that it is equitable and that it is inclusive.

So that's all. *Hahom*. Thanks.

Meredith Larson: Thank you. And with all the mention of TCUs, let's go back to our TCU institutional researcher, Ace.

Ace Charette: Thank you again. And thank you to other panelists. I'd just like to take a second to acknowledge that the work of the panelists and in the content that you all have provided is really germane. And it strikes a lot of healthy chords with conversations and current movements happening within my organization.

So I just want to really acknowledge that. And thank you all for some wonderful information that you all shared for me personally, and then I hope for our audience as well. I'll kind of just chime in here and reiterate a lot of thoughts from my angle to some degree, and again, hopefully just provide some good content here, as well. Research on Indigenous culture in so far as it is expressed within institutions of higher education and other educations, in general, demonstrates that this is not only possible, but it leads to healthier more capable Native and non-Native individuals who are, engaging within those systems.

How research can help is definitely the identification of ongoing structural barriers for Indigenous populations, institution type, and organization type is obviously very important here. But what tends to happen is that within sometimes different forms of national research and field research, Indigenous populations are often not represented in those data sets. And statistical significance is often the issue there.

It's relative to those larger data sets. There's not enough information about Native American students. There's not enough people within those organization types to produce statistically valid information, and that's a limitation. But it does bear a question: when that is found when this particular subgroup, it cannot be represented in the model of research that's engaged with, what's the

next step? Certainly, we can't say let's just not publish that research as a result of that non-inclusion.

Certainly, for other populations, that research is still very impactful, very important. And that's not the argument I want to take, but it does bear the question: after the fact, when there's a gap therein knowledge about Indigenous populations within North America, whose responsibility is it, and who is equipped to take on that conversation?

Before I get to that question, I'd like to acknowledge that there definitely is a lot of interesting research going on within Native-serving organizations already. I work closely with two organizations that come to mind, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, which I know was referenced earlier. We have a lot of data going on within that organization, and there's a lot of conversation about research. I know they have a committee on research as well within that organization.

The American Indian College Fund is another one. They support a variety of initiatives including participation in a research explicitly within the tribal college network. A few recent projects that I have been engaged with range from return on investment for Indigenous students, college affordability for the TCU network, quality of credentialing, the identifying of factors of student success mechanisms and barriers within higher education, graduate placement.

You know, and certainly, I cannot take credit for these. These are just studies that I've been engaged with as an IR person and in supporting kind of the data in, from my one organization. But it speaks to the interplay between how organizations can work together on research initiatives. Now, getting back to that question of what happens after there's an awareness of a gap in Native American inclusion in research, I think that organizations that are Native-serving or researchers that tend to be Native-facing can really help to fill that void to better understand what's going on with Indigenous students within organization types.

And I want to just make that plug because I'm just aware of so many wonderful things happening. And I know that a confluence between different organization types, research organization types, can really benefit and enrich the

conversations. Yeah, the benefit here is, of course, that Native Americans are not a monolith, and folks who work and are embedded within Native American-serving organizations or Native kind of facing research and have that experience, they'll be able to help with nuance and understanding about research perspectives, and that really helps to prevent kind of broad characterizations of Native peoples.

There are 574 federal recognized tribes in the U.S., and there are more who are currently... like, I just saw news articles just this week of another one seeking federal recognition as well. So they mean there's an incredibly diverse array of governance types, worldviews, philosophies, value systems, etc.

We're not all one, you know, definition. And so understanding that nuance and being able to kind of blend that within a research approach, I think is very, very helpful and very, very beneficial to the research paradigm. The economic well-being. I want to answer that part of the question, too. I think it's a really interesting component. Inter-tribal relationships to me have always been fascinating. I think that as a result of our federal recognized status, we've kind of developed a line of relationship, a governance relationship between us and the federal government. And that has to be there, of course.

I think what has been minimized, compared to how we used to behave as tribal people historically, is that we used to be extraordinarily inter-tribally connected. There's actually clan structures within the Ojibwe peoples that had a whole clan devoted to just looking outward from the tribe and understanding how to navigate relationships with other tribal peoples in a really sophisticated political fashion.

So how do we kind of take that understanding and take it into the modern-day? I think that there is an incredibly rich amount of inquiry that could be kind of shined at that particular inquiry.

You know, I'll stop here because I don't want to go on too much, but I'll repeat a kind of a coin a phrase to say that "A rising tide lifts all boats," and anything within the research sphere or adjacent to it, to empower Indigenous peoples to improve socioeconomic and specifically economic conditions will be beneficial

for not just those Indigenous nations, but for the entire, you know, U.S. population.

You know, you're targeting a better form of well-being for some of the most disadvantaged, historically, people here in this country. Yeah, that's a wonderful thing. And again, it only helps the entire population. I'll end just by saying, you know, there's really no small amount of work that can be done in those regards and yeah, even directly within Indigenous nations and organizations outside of them.

So I'll just stop there, turn it back over to Meredith. And again, thank you for the time to share my world with you today.

Meredith Larson: Thank you. I got a little DM saying we have a whole bunch of questions in the Q and A, and so we're going to shift over to that in a minute here. So we're going to do just a quick, rapid-fire, one-sentence answer, like one sentence to the final question, and then we're going to open it up, get some of those questions and just share some ideas and some thoughts.

Okay? So the last question, and, you know, just kind of the first thing that comes to mind is “What else would you like to share with the education research community?” If you could tell them one thing before we end today, what is the one thing that you would like them to know?

And let's see, let's start with Erica. Oh yeah, put you on the spot. So just one thing that you want all researchers to keep in mind as we go into more conversation.

Erica Moore: I will say I'll just go right back to something that was said to me once, we do not want our students to keep looking at the past, we want them to look to the future, but for me, our future is a cumulative response to our past, and what's happening today is our present. Take that into consideration when doing this research in that historical context, the lens through the understanding of the ways in which Indigenous people have experienced erasure and loss. And then authentically you will be more culturally responsive when you're doing that work with us. Thank you.

Meredith Larson: That is great. Thank you. Lisa, would you like to give us your one big thing to think about?

Erica Martin: This is tricky. I would have to say I think in response to the question about equity, answers to equity around whatever we're talking about related to equity have been out there and have been voiced. And so I think everybody's listening differently now.

And so just to remember that the answers are out there and they've been shared. And so that's related, to research equity, and so just that we think that way because the answers are there and have been there, and we'll continue to talk about them as well.

Meredith Larson: Thank you, Lisa. Steph or Ace, whoever wants to go next.

Steph Fryberg: I'm happy to go. I do think it's a complicated question, but I would say that we need to push the bounds of basic research and what we think of as good science. That what looks like good science in a university may not look like practical or good science in a tribal community or to tribal people, and I think within that, we need to do a better job of listening to what Native people and tribal communities say their education needs are.

And we need to fund them using their language. I think too often, we try to put our own spin on what communities need. And I agree. We know what we need. And, you know, we watch our kids struggle, but I have seen funders be fairly patronizing with tribal, both researchers, and with tribal communities.

And I think we need to do a better job of trusting that we know what our children need.

Meredith Larson: Thank you. And, Ace?

Ace Charette: Yeah. Just very succinctly, I'll just state that, you know, even recent research in Indigenous populations in U.S. higher education systems, there's still a huge equity gap that currently exists. So the things that we've covered today and the things that we're talking about, there's quite a lot of room, quite a lot of room to deepen the understanding of why that gap exists and then how to bridge that gap with other population groups.

So I welcome, you know, and I'm sure any of the panelists here would welcome inquiry from anybody interested in this work on how that can occur. And I look forward to any follow-throughs and even if that's outside of myself, like, how that can happen in the future. So I'll just stop there. Thank you.

Meredith Larson: Thank you. Thank you all for just being so super positive and, you know, like, taking time out of your busy day, to talk to us, to answer some questions in a minute here, and to share your experiences. I want to invite Ron and the commissioners if you want to turn your cameras on as well. So welcome back, everybody.

Ron Lessard: Yes. Thank you. Could I say something real quick?

Meredith Larson: Yes.

Ron Lessard: So I wanted to thank all the panelists because they've each touched on something that, you know, has troubled us for many years. As taking off my Department of Education work, going back for many years and doing activist work, my mom was in the boarding school system and instilled in us that the importance of education rather than looking at education as a very negative thing, although it was not a good experience, in many cases, for her or all our people.

But the thing that I think was interesting, Erica, I think everyone touched on the fact that when it comes to data, when it comes to research, there's an element of mistrust that has for many, many years for, and Erica would mention this, why do you want this data? What do you want to use it for? You know, because we've given you information in the past and you haven't turned that into positive work.

And I think, you know, that's true of healthcare and other things but especially in education. So I just wanted to say that, you know, going back to the Executive Order into this administration, the work that was put into that around equity is very substantial, and it has to do with looking at equity across faculty and across, you know, students and how can the administration partner with other organizations on the ground that are doing this work.

So that national effort, you know, needs to happen. And we in the federal government have to be a part of that and work with those organizations on the ground and do whatever we can do to close that gap of the mistrust of collecting data and research from Native communities.

Meredith Larson: Thank you, Ron. Ron. Liz or Joan, do you have a question, or should we look into the chat?

Joan McLaughlin: Yes. I want to thank the panelists for coming here and just really giving us a great deal to think about. I was struck. I think they were things along the entire time that we spent together that really struck a chord with me. And I know that IES is very committed to trying to change some of the things that we are doing in the past, be more inclusive, be thoughtful about the ways that we develop education sciences going forward.

And especially what Ron said is building trust. And I think that's hard and takes a lot of more work, but I think we're committed to doing that, and it's, nothing is going to be easy, but I think we're all committed to doing that.

And I hope that going forward, we can touch base with you again because, you know, there'll be a lot of touchpoints along the way as we make our journey forward. And I just want to thank you. And I also want to thank the participants because it's really great to see such a wonderful turnout and it gives us such a strong sense of how important this is.

And, Liz, what do you have to add?

Elizabeth Albro: So what do I have to add other than again, to just echo the thanks and I just really appreciated the thoughtfulness, and I really loved hearing the diversity of voices that each of you represent, different sectors. I think the other thing that really struck home to me, Lisa, you were talking about home visiting and thinking about these connections across the different sectors that in the way the federal system is currently structured are very isolated.

And I think that gives us ways to think about “How can we do better internally in terms of thinking about how these different sectors play together?” But mostly, thank you for taking the time. And yes, I want to echo Joan's comments and Ron's that we hope that you will feel free to reach out to us and to continue

to share with us as we are trying to figure out how to make sure that Native and Alaska Native voices are included in the work that we fund and support.

So thank you. And, Meredith, I'm going to turn this back to you. I think we have some...

Joan McLaughlin: How about Dr. Ricciuti?

Elizabeth Albro: Oh, Dr... Yes, Anne. Where are you Dr. Ricciuti? Thank you.

Anne Ricciuti: Hi, can everyone hear me? So I just wanted to also thank the panel and all of the participants for these really thoughtful comments and giving us a lot to think about.

I oversee the peer review for our research grants and our reports. And as you saw, one of the things that we're really trying to do is improve the diversity of the voices that we hear on our peer review panels. And we do have a portal for people who are interested in reviewing for us to submit their information, and we will put that in the chat and make sure that gets around to everybody lots more, but we really want to hear from you.

So thank you so much. That's really what I wanted to say.

Meredith Larson: Thank you, everyone. And I'm going to turn to my colleagues who have been monitoring the Q and A function for us, Katina, Vinita, or Jamie, is there a question for the panel or for anybody?

Vinita Chhabra: I have a question that I can share that came through on the chat. And the question is, "As a librarian archivist at a non-TCU, we acknowledge that there are fiscal barriers that prevent many TCUs from accessing resources, timely, relevant, responsive, etc., using databases that non-TCUs can afford. This creates big inequity for TCU students. What are some solutions, both practical and aspirational that you can see when looking at this particular barrier?"

Meredith Larson: Erica or Ace, do you have any recommendations from your work with higher ed?

Erica Moore: Yeah, I'll just go really quickly. We're actually, AIHEC is actually in conversations with one of the leading database providers. We're looking at how they can provide free access to the resources there to the tribal colleges.

Another really great way, but we'd have to get the land grants on board with this, but some land-grant institutions have considered that they're receiving revenue off of the land that was once Indigenous peoples in that area, in that geographical area. And they're taking that revenue and putting it back into building better and fostering relationships with tribal communities and assisting students.

And I think some of that funding should and could allow for TCUs in their respective states to have access to the land grant institutions' databases for research. I think there's just many ways that we can do this. And I think that's why relationship and collaboration is really important in the work that Indigenous peoples do.

And hopefully, AIHEC can continue to grow those relationships with other database providers to continue to expand that access. That's just some of the ways in which we're working on it. Thank you.

Ace Charette: Yeah. From my end, I think really echoing a lot of what Erica just mentioned I think grants are available as well. Humanities grants may be one way to fund something like that. But here on the topic of research, I wonder if research funding and research, you know, partnerships might be a possibility.

If we can identify that there is an equity gap evident and manifested there and then alleviate that equity gap, I think that really puts a lot of, you know, it provides a lot of emphasis behind the conversation to really find ways to break down that equity barrier. And really what we're talking about is cost.

So how does that happen, and what are the mechanisms for breaking that down? I think that's an interesting inquiry for sure.

Meredith Larson: Katina, I think you had the next question.

Katina Stapleton: I do. So there's a question that I'm going to just summarize because it was kind of long, and it's about, how do we make sure in data collections that Native American and Alaska Native students are actually counted, especially those that are multiracial?

And that's to the panel or Jamie Deaton, if you're still here as well, you could probably speak on that as well.

Lisa Moore: I can offer a little bit of insight. I know I'm not as from a student perspective, but we were doing work in Michigan looking at infant and maternal mortality. And there were a lot of data sets that didn't collect information on both parents. Whereas the infant, in the instances of infant mortality, the infant was just counted as an infant if the mother was identified as American Indian or Alaska Native.

What we did was a lot of work to identify our babies was to expand the search criteria to include fathers and mothers. And if they... It may be a different data set, but also there is other work when multiple races are indicated that you count anybody that says they have ancestry or they are American Indian, Alaska Native regardless of the data set and that we count them.

Erica Moore: Yeah, I guess I could just add. You know, I'm one of those individuals who would have to mark Hispanic, and then once you click that, they don't even allow you the option to continue. I think that's something that at the federal level that would have to be worked out, not something that we can necessarily change.

But at the institutions that I've worked at, we collected our own data while we always shared the IPEDs data, shared, you know, information from the, you know, sent federal census, we also collected our own data.

We included, for example, the one institution changed the way in which they collected when a student would hit they're Hispanic, they allowed the pop-up boxes to still happen, and then we worked diligently with registrars to separate those students. Even if they were listed Hispanic and Native American, they weren't automatically just put in this multicultural population and then just thrown out there as figure out, you know, what to do with them after.

So I think the institutions, until the federal way in which we collect that data can be changed or altered or amended, I think we just need to do that work to make sure that our students are being seen. Oftentimes, as someone brought up in the very beginning of this, Native American data, like, often doesn't exist because we won't even be put in there.

And they'll say, oh, the data set was too small. Let's find a way that we still include it. Let's find a way that we change whatever is creating an environment where we can't see our students that are Native and have, you know, blended families and different races and different ethnicities because they're still important too. So thank you.

Meredith Larson: Katina or Vinita, I think you DM'd and said that there were other new questions.

Katina Stapleton: Sure.

Vinita Chhabra: Yes, I... Okay, go ahead, Katina.

Katina Stapleton: Sorry. I was going to say in the beginning, Meredith, you had up a slide with different ideas that we had from IES. And one of the ideas was about building capacity in the Native American and Alaska Native community for people to conduct research and also to apply for grants and such from IES, and so I was going to ask the panel if they had any advice or a wish list of things around training and development for aspiring and current Native scholars.

Meredith Larson: So, please, wish for us. What do you wish we had or wish existed?

Steph Fryberg: So I'm going to jump in. I mean, there are a few things. One is I think there's a tremendous need for multi-method researchers in Indian country. And we don't have as many sort of empirical researchers, so it would be nice to find ways to help within.

I mean, many tribes have their own grant and research areas, but to really reach out and see what would be most helpful to individual tribes. So that would be

one. But two is helping build partnerships so that we are getting Native students involved in research much earlier.

So often, you know, they're finding it difficult to find their way through college campuses anyway, but, you know, there are many brilliant students out there, and then it's just hard to get into programs because they don't have enough research background. And so we've been trying in our own work to reach out and see if we can get universities' psych departments to look for Indigenous students in their intro psych courses to connect them with our research center.

And we need more opportunities to go out there and really, you know, find students and get them involved in research at a much younger age. Also, I would say, I mean, I certainly, there are people here who speak for tribal colleges who wouldn't do that. We have a partnership with tribal colleges, just a handful that we are working with.

And one of the things that the president said in our meeting is that they want to figure out how to get more formal research opportunities with big-time researchers. And, you know, so we've been serious in trying to build that partnership with the handful of tribal colleges we've been working with.

And I think that's something we really have to get serious about. And, you know, I know my institution has very much said they would help us fund that connection. But, you know, IES could do a lot in helping us to build those research partnerships.

Ace Charette: I'll piggyback off of Steph, and I think you painted the picture beautifully, Steph. Can we engage TCUs to create engines of research activity within the TCU network? That would be a wish list item right there, absolutely. And that takes not only identification of how to train student researchers, but that requires faculty and researcher specific, you know, training and kind of placement considerations.

So, I think again, in talking about, like, the work that can be done, that's a whole vast field of possibility right there as well.

Erica Moore: My wish is that we can increase the number of Ph.D. doctoral programs, master programs, doctoral programs at TCUs. I think that's really important.

Often time in this work, we keep hearing, “Well, there aren’t, there were no Indigenous researchers available. There were no Indigenous Ph.D. scholars for us to hire.” If we as a whole put effort into increasing the number of masters and doctoral programs at TCUs because TCUs statistically, starting fall 2018, were 89% of Native students were attending tribal colleges.

So the more we can uplift and assist tribal colleges increase the number of programs offered and increase the number of masters and doctoral programs offered, we're going to be able to put out more Indigenous scholars at a quicker rate to help meet those Indigenous research needs. So that's my wish.

Thank you.

Meredith Larson: And I'm sorry, I'm just looking at the clock and realizing that we have only at like a minute left.

[Upcoming Events / Slide 15]

Meredith Larson: So let me go ahead and quick pull up a final slide that just has some information about our next steps sort of what's going on at IES and other ways for you to stay in touch. And then I'll just say I'll hand it off to Ron to wrap everything up.

So we appreciate all of your time. Thank you all for coming. It was an amazing event. Hundreds of people came. This is great. Very invigorating for us. We'll continue to do listening events as listed here [inaudible] and, please, keep in touch. Ron, would you like to [inaudible] the party started?

[Keep in Touch / Slide 16]

Ron Lessard: Yes. I want to thank everyone for joining us today. I apologize for my technical issue in the beginning, but if you'd like to reach out to me and, please, that's ron.lessard@ed.gov, and I can certainly provide copies of the new Executive Order and, you know, have a discussion on that, but, please, keep in touch with us.

We're here to help in any way we can. Thank you.