



National American Indian & Alaska Native

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Treating and Healing our Native Youth School Mental Health Supplemental Grant Report

Fall 2022

C. Allison Baez, PhD
Teresa Brewington,
MBA, M.Ed
Parker Laney, BA
Anne Helene Skinstad,
PhD, PsyD

Land Acknowledgement

We would like to take this time to acknowledge the land and pay respect to the Indigenous Nations whose homelands were forcibly taken over and inhabited.

Past and present, we want to honor the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations.

This calls us to commit to forever learn how to be better stewards of these lands through action, advocacy, support, and education.

We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced occupation of Native American territories, and we respect the many diverse indigenous people connected to this land on which we gather from time immemorial.

While injustices are still being committed against Indigenous people on Turtle Island, today we say thank you to those that stand with Indigenous peoples and acknowledge that land reparations must be made to allow healing for our Indigenous peoples and to mother earth, herself.

Dekibaota, Elleh Driscoll, BA, Meskwaki, and Winnebago Nations
Ttakimaweakwe, Keely Driscoll, BA, Meskwaki, and Winnebago Nations

Supported by:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Acknowledgements

The School Mental Health Supplemental Grant report is developed by faculty, staff, and students in The National American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Technology Transfer Center.

This document is a result of extensive work on the part of faculty and staff in the National AI/AN Mental Health, K – 12 School Mental Health program, and I want to specifically thank Parker Laney, BA; Meg Schneider, BA; Stephanie Otskey, MPH; Sergei Deptula, MA; Mya Davis, MPH; Bethany Walczak, BS; Makena Clark, MA; C. Allison Baez, PhD; and Teresa Brewington, MBA, M.Ed for their important contributions to the development and design of this publications. I also would like to thank Rob Svetly and Yu-Hsin Lin for strong support all through our project implementation phase.

Other students or staff that are not on the author list & members of the staff have also played an important role in making this document be perfect.

The National American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health TTC, K – 12 School Mental Health program is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). I would like to thank our Government Program Officers Humberto Carvalho, MPH, and Kimberly Reynolds, MPA, MEd. for their support and encouragements throughout the process of developing this document.

However, the content of this document is the creation of the faculty and staff in the National AI/AN MHTTC K – 12 SMH program and the opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of SAMHA or DHHS.

Anne Helene Skinstad

Table of Contents

Preface.....	5
Introduction.....	6
Online Learning.....	7
Loss of Caregivers.....	8
Mental health challenges in a pandemic.....	8
Accessibility Challenges.....	9
Demographics/Feedback.....	10
School Mental Health Program.....	11
School Mental Health Program Webinars.....	12-13
Publications.....	14
References.....	15



Preface

It is with great pleasure I share with you the School Mental Health Program Report. The National American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Technology Transfer Center, K – 12 School Mental Health Program, in collaboration with Native Educators and those working with indigenous youth across the country, have been working to help provide culturally informed, knowledge, and evidence-based approaches to improve mental health services in schools serving Native youth.

It is easy to focus on the challenges COVID-19 brought with it for our indigenous youth, but by doing so we overlook their extraordinary strength, resilience, and creativity that tribal schools faced during the traumatic months from 2020. Instead let us focus on the solutions and strength the communities bring when working with the School Mental Health program to continue to create publications and products that will aid school personnel and ultimately our youth.

Amazing work has gone into creating webinars to support and provided solutions to the challenges facing indigenous youth now. This document contains data collected about the exacerbated challenges facing youth today. Struggles and adversity fills the first pages followed by the online session, printed guides and fact sheets created to help face the unprecedented new challenges.

We hope by sharing the challenges and aid provided we can reflect the strength of indigenous communities and share our experience helping indigenous communities.

Anne Helene Skinstad



Introduction



The School Mental Health program was funded in 2019 by SAM-HSA through a Supplement to the National AI/AN Mental Health Technology Transfer Center. The goals for this program were to help K-12 teachers, counselors, and other school personnel working with indigenous students, to implement mental health (MH) services in schools serving Native. Science has shown us that when students receive MH services in their school environment, they are more able to profit from the services and do not have to experience access issues, like transportation. Furthermore, culture is prevention, and implement culturally informed, and knowledge, and evidence-based approaches to improving mental health services to Native youth in K – 12 Schools, was another important goal for us.

Before COVID-19 children were spending more time in school than any other formal institutional structure, our goal was to give school personnel the training and technical assistance (TA) they needed to support mental health initiatives for the children and youth they are caring for.

After the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in community shutdowns, most schools, public and tribal, made the move to online learning. Teachers and school staff who work with Native children and youth faced new challenges: lack of internet access and AI/AN children's difficulty adjusting to learning online. The National AI/AN School Mental Health Program launched online sessions, printed guides, and fact sheets to help teachers and school staff combat these challenges. Furthermore, faculty and staff implemented programs using a virtual format to prepare students and school personnel going back to school in the fall of 2020.

Indigenous youth already face many challenges in school that are also felt by their white counterparts. Bullying and mental health challenges for example, already were impacting our youth even before COVID-19. The pandemic has brought forth new concerns and challenges that are hitting indigenous youth in school particularly hard.

The data and information in this report is based on formal and informal data collection from our Need's Assessment and our Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) data. In addition we collect information about Tribal and Urban Indian community's needs through conversations, webinars, and meetings.

This document highlights the challenges the pandemic brought to indigenous youth, and the support and technical assistance the School Mental Health program provided. Through webinars listed in the following pages, and products on our website the National AI/AN TTC acted as a resource so that indigenous youth could continue their education and overcome the barriers erected to stop them.

Sincerely,

Anne Helene Skinstad

Transition to Online Learning

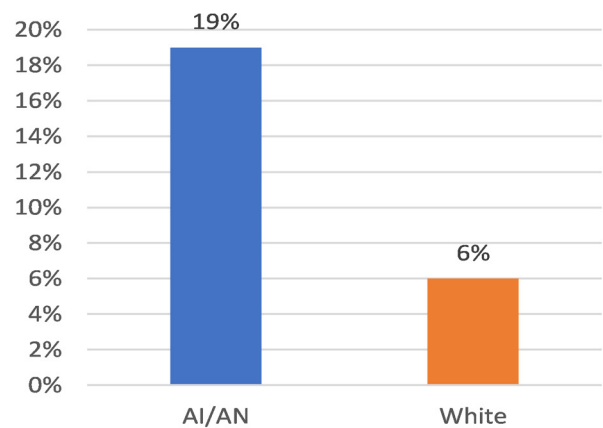
School closures and the movement to online learning were in an effort to help students continue their education safely during the pandemic. Limiting exposure and contact with others in schools was an effort to protect students and keep them safe and healthy. Online learning as an alternative for students was a good way to help students not fall behind. Online learning can be a great asset for students as an alternative provided the infrastructure is in place that supports students learning.

It should not be overlooked that public schools provide many services to underprivileged students that rely on them. With school closures students lost access to

- Teachers
- Food Programs
- Mental Health support/School counselors
- Peers (leads to isolation)

In many cases when school food programs were still being continued they required students and family to have transportation to the schools to obtain a meal (many families lack this transportation).

Households that did not get enough to eat



Online schooling is not accessible to everyone, it requires students to have a smartphone/home computer, environment that promotes learning and access to a stable reliable internet connection. AI/AN students are left behind educationally with online school because they (more than their white counterparts) lack:

- A smartphone to participate in online classes/submit online assignments
- Internet access (more than 1/3 of AI/AN students live in a home without broadband internet access)
- Computer access (15% of students live in a home without a computer)

1/3 of AI/AN children live in a home without broadband internet access



■ Without internet access

The information on this page comes from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities’s “Tracking the COVID-19 Economy’s Effects on Food, Housing, and Employment Hardships” (<https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/tracking-the-covid-19-economys-effects-on-food-housing-and>) and the Society for Research in Child Development’s Statement of Evidence “Addressing Inequities in Education: Considerations for American Indian and Alaska Native Children and Youth in the Era of COVID-19” (<https://www.srkd.org/research/addressing-inequities-education-considerations-american-indian-and-alaska-native-children>).



COVID-19 and the loss of caregivers

140,00 children have lost a parent or a grandparent caregiver to COVID-19

- Black, Latino and Native American children have been hit hard (They have up to 4.5x the risk of losing a caregiver to covid compared to white children (NIH report))
- For every 4 covid related deaths one child was left without a mother, father or grandparent that provided the child's home and basic needs (http://www.charkoosta.com/news/covid-19-disproportionately-impacts-native-youth-leaves-children-without-caregivers/article_bdce3404-2d1b-11ec-8816-b3f992ae1e2b.html)
- 1 out of 500 children in the US experienced COVID associated orphanhood or the death of a grandparent caregiver
- Between April 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 142,637 children lost a primary or secondary caregiver

The greatest disparities were among non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native children and Black children. The study showed that

- 1 of every 168 American Indian/Alaska Native children
- 1 of every 310 Black children
- 1 of every 412 Hispanic children
- 1 of every 612 Asian children
- 1 of every 753 White children

experienced orphanhood or death of caregivers due to COVID-19.

Mental Health Challenges in a Pandemic

National Indian Health Board: data shows that adolescents, and parents of young children (5-12 years) report worsened emotional, cognitive, and mental health

- Access to mental health care in school (a common source of care for school-aged children) has likely decreased due to school closures during the pandemic

National Institute of Mental Health:

- 50% of lifetime mental disorder start in adolescent
- 1 in 5 children ages 13-18 have, or will have a serious mental illness
- Half of the lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 75% by age 24
- Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for youth ages 10-24
- In Native communities suicide among children and teens is epidemic proportions
 - 79% of parents with depressed children do not recognize their child's depression often due to their own psychopathology, dismissal of mental health symptoms as part of developmental changes or family burden

Accessibility Challenges

Low-tech paper solutions innovated for students who lack the devices and technology to full participate in online school. Unfortunately these solutions are not fully accessible for students either.

For example: in some areas teachers drove around in school buses to deliver paper copies of schoolwork to students who might not have access to copies otherwise.

This does not solve the language barrier challenge for AI/AN students however. Many students in tribal lands do not speak English as their first language, while most paperwork given to students is written in English.

There are unique challenges for educators in the time of COVID, working to continue supporting students while online schooling persists. AI/AN students need even more support.

In Pueblo of Jemez their native language Jemez/Towa is not permitted to be written down (a completely oral language) and this is the primary language for the vast majority of students. Work sheets in English would be very confusing and not helpful, and would rely on parents needing to translate who might not speak/read English either.

Tribal lands are shutdown

Similarly to schools moving online to prevent students from spreading COVID to each other. Tribal Lands shutdown to protect citizens from COVID-19. The shutdown meant stalling economic activity on tribal lands that would otherwise be used to pay for essential services. A tribal shutdown means...

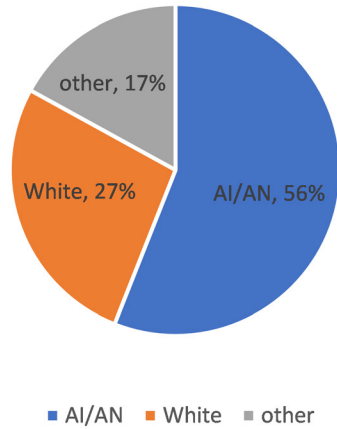
- There is a loss of community and ceremony (especially in times of grieving and community support)
- When tribal lands are shutdown tribes lose access to revenue that would typically be used to keep essential services going (such as: local law enforcement, public safety and other social services)
 - Tribes rely on revenue from casinos and tourism to continue to fund these essential services
- Tribal enterprises (casinos/tourism) are main sources of jobs, economic anchors and main employers for most citizens
- Tribal governments are unable to collect adequate taxes to fund all the services, unlike state and other local governments that have a tax base they can continue to pull from

In 2019 tribal gaming enterprises generated \$17.7 billion in taxes to federal, state and local governments. Before COVID tribal businesses and governments supported more than 1.1 million jobs, 915,000 held by non natives. (COVID, worst of both worlds)



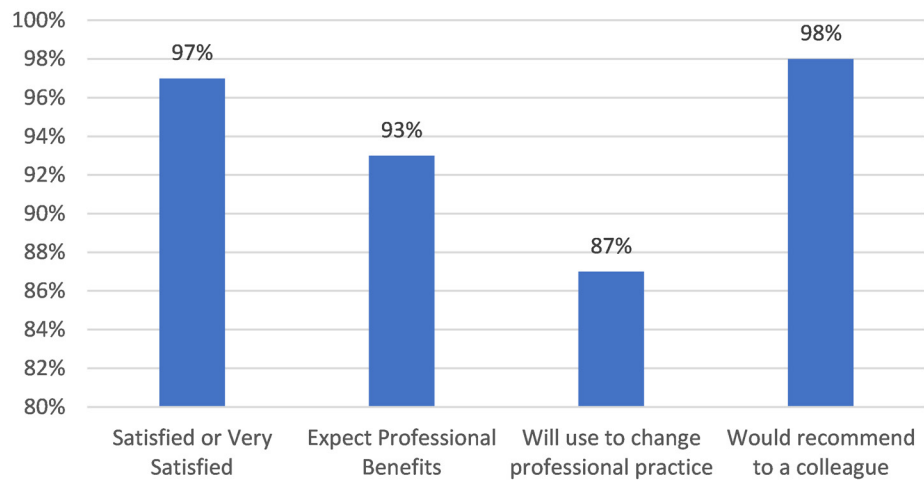
Participant ethnic demographics:

Participant Racial Make up



Feedback:

Feedback



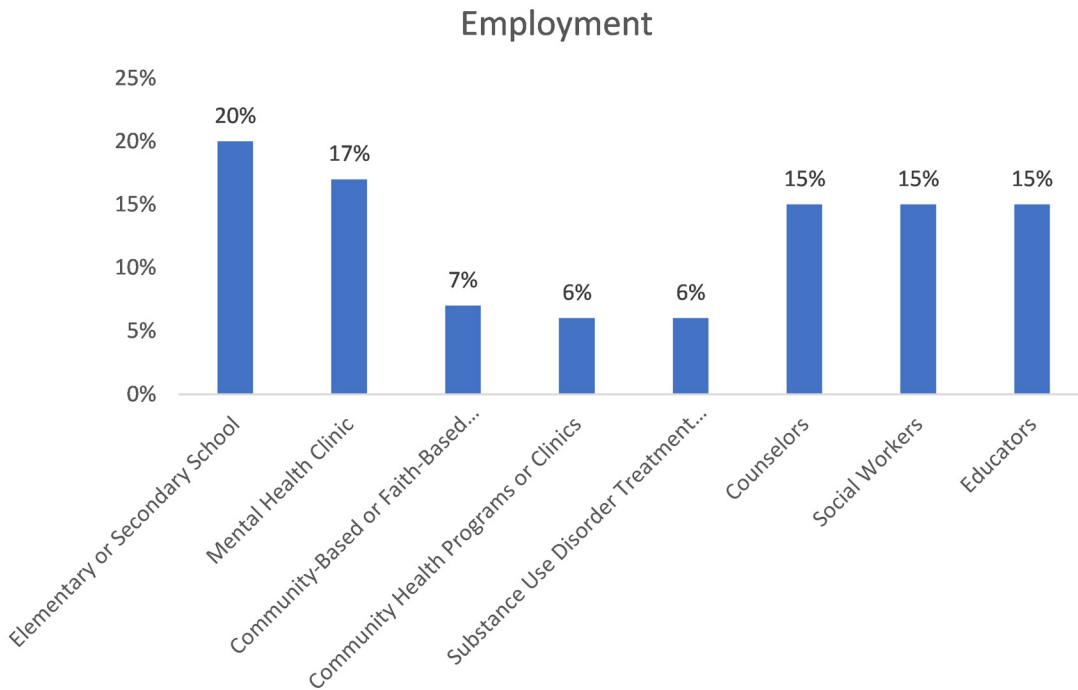
School Mental Health Program

Background (before COVID-19): The School Mental Health program was funded in 2019 to help K-12 teachers, counselors, and others working with indigenous students implement culturally appropriate, knowledge, and evidence based approaches to improve mental health in Native youth. Before COVID-19 children were spending more time in school than any other formal institutional structure, our goal was to give school personnel the training and technical assistance they need to support mental health initiatives for children and youth they are caring for.

After COVID-19 hit most schools, public and tribal, made the move to online learning. Teachers and school staff who work with AIAN children and youth faced new challenges: lack of internet access and AIAN children’s difficulty adjusting to learning online. The NAIAN School Mental Health Program launched online sessions, printed guides and fact sheets to help teachers and school staff combat these challenges.

- 68 events
- 3,289 participants
- 150 federally recognized tribes represented
- 39 states

Participant employment:





School Mental Health Program Webinars:

W: COVID-19 and its impact on native students, presented by Connie Locklear – part of overcoming the storm. January 14, 2021

- Outcome analysis of needs of students after experiencing the height of the COVID-19 pandemic

W: The COVID-19 Vaccine with Dean Seneca January 29, 2021

- Cultural History of healthcare for AI/AN peoples
- Current vaccine information
- Discussion around COVID-19 vaccine

W: Overcoming the Storm: Special Bi-Monthly Training for AI/AN School Communities in the COVID-19 Pandemic January 14, 2021- March 2021

- The MHTTC K-12 program is offering free training sessions throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic to support education programs in Tribal Communities
- MHTTC K - 12 program hopes to offer support, resiliency tools, and connections that are relevant and supportive as Native American communities remain resilient

W: From Longhouse to Schoolhouse: AI/AN school communities coming together in partnership to learn, collaborate, and share experiences and knowledge

W: Indigenous Motherhood: Mind-Body Healing presented by Victoria Maria. May 13, 2021

- During Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month
- Mind-body connection and conversations about sexuality within the context of parenting and schools to empower young people to take control of their bodies in a sex-positive way

W: Respecting Life: A Sweetgrass Method for Bullying Prevention for Native Youth by Dr. Mark and Dr. Allison Baez. May 28, 2021

- Basics of defining bullying, cyberbullying, and prominence of these issues with Native students in school with the introduction of the Sweetgrass Method as developed by Dr Mark and Allison.

W: LGBTQ by Allison and Mark. June 10, 2021

- Presentation of Native history and Two-Spirit origins during Pride month
- Questions and discussions regarding Two-Spirit support in Native communities

W: Applying the Sweetgrass Method (A&M) June 25, 2021

- A and M explain applying the Sweetgrass Method to relevant case studies

W: Telehealth in Native Communities. August 8, 2021

- Introduction of the initiative / About the initiative: One month of intensive training for BH counselors, nurses, and others providing BH services in Native communities
- Opportunity to learn and utilize telehealth for one year. Access to HIPAA-compliant platform for one year

W: Navigating the New Normal: AI and AN School Communities Reopening in 2021-2022. August 6 & 19, 2021

- In this series for K-12 professionals, we will host a panel discussion on key topics of planning for reopening, social emotional learning (SEL), self-care for professionals, life post-crisis in the US, strategic planning tools, and more
- We hope to bring the K-12 community together and offer mutual support as we navigate this new school year
- Learning Objectives: define social emotional learning components, Identify ways to implement SEL in 2021-2022, and predict SEL in students after 2020-2021 school year

W: School Mental Health Mindful Movement Series August 3,10,17,31; September 7,17,21,28; October 5,12, 19,26; November 2,9,16, 23, 30; December 7, 14, 21, 2021

- Mindful Movement is a 30 minute meditation space for individuals to ground themselves, release any built up tension, prepare for the week ahead

W: Being Brave: Grounding Ourselves in Our Ancestors' Resilience. January 20, 2022

- What does it mean to be "brave?" How do we incorporate those characteristics in a culturally responsive way
- This workshop will guide you through some grounding techniques that tap into the strength and resilience of American Indian / Alaska Native communities
- You'll work through exercises that you can adapt for any age to activate mindfulness into your programming

W: University of Minnesota Extension March 2, 2022

- National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative and the MHTTC K-12 grants overview, including available curricula and training for anyone working with American Indian and Alaskan Native youth, including suicide prevention and if/how it is integrated into programs and curricula and additional helpful data regarding program/training use and effective outcomes

W: An American Indian in the Classroom: Overcoming Trauma in Education for Native Youth Pts. 1 & 2 March 10 and 17, 2022

- This presentation will explore how historical educational oppression is linked to contemporary oppression in the classroom and schools and offer some guidance on how to overcome these barriers to support Native youth and families

W: Pathway to Crisis, Recovery and Resiliency March 29, 2022

- The National American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Technology Center, the K-12 Center, and the National American Indian and Alaska Native Child Traumatic Stress Initiative are pleased to announce a collaborative project with Jacqueline S. Gray, PhD (Cherokee/Choctaw descendent), retired research associate professor, to assist in creating a crisis, recovery, and resiliency team to serve your community. After taking the training, participants will possess the knowledge and skills to go out into their Native community as a facilitator.

W: Summer Across Indian Country with Native Youth and Their Families April 29, 2022

- Summer camp is beneficial for youth in many ways, including the development of important social, emotional, and cognitive skills
- This session will offer parents and families ideas to keep children active with healthy and safe opportunities during the summer month



Publications: (from our center) (MHTTC webpage)

Our center, the Native Center for Behavioral Health has developed a variety a publications to aid in the School Mental Program's mission. All of our publications can be found on the NAI/AN MHTTC webpage.

Early Childhood and Parenting Resources
Mental Health Awareness Month Fact sheets
National Mental Health Month Fact Sheet

Mental Health Evidence-Based Practices for American Indian and Alaska Native Schools and Communities November 22, 2019

Resources for K-12 School Initiatives during COVID-19 September 4, 2020

K-12 COVID Best Practices Poster October 5, 2020

Suicide Among Native Populations Factsheets September 23, 2021
Reb Ribbon Week flyers October 22, 2021

Serious Emotional Distrubance Among Native Populations Fact Sheet October 29, 2021

Serious Mental Illness Among Native Populations Fact Sheet October 29, 2021

Youth Substance Use Prevention and Awareness In Native Communities Pocket Guide October 29, 2021

Bullying and Native Youth Fact Sheet November 2, 2021

A Teacher's Guide to Celebrating Native American Heritage Month November 20, 2021

Women's History Month Posters March 22, 2022

K-12 Program Guide April 8, 2022

Guide for AI/AN Families during Quarantine April 8, 2022

K-12 Newsletter May 23, 2022

LGBTQ+Two Spirit Fact sheet June 23, 2022

Pride Month Flyers June 28, 2022

REFERENCES:

1. Tracking the COVID-19 Economy's Effects on Food, Housing, and Employment Hardships. (2022, February 10). Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/tracking-the-covid-19-economys-effects-on-food-housing-and>
2. Bauer, A. B., Feir, D. L. F., & Gregg, M. G. (2021, September 1). Center for Indian Country Development research reveals depth of tribal digital divide | Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2021/center-for-indian-country-development-research-reveals-depth-of-tribal-digital-divide>
3. Mineo, L. M. (2020, May 8). The impact of COVID-19 on Native American communities. Harvard Gazette. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/05/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-native-american-communities/#:%7E:text=National%20%26%20World%20Affairs-,For%20Native%20Americans%2C%20COVID%2D19%20is%20'the%20worst%20of,distancing%20measures%20during%20the%20pandemic.>
4. Biden, J. R. B. (2021, October 11). Executive Order on the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/10/11/executive-order-on-the-white-house-initiative-on-advancing-educational-equity-excellence-and-economic-opportunity-for-native-americans-and-strengthening-tribal-colleges-and-universities/>
5. Tsethlikaj, M. T., Sarche, M. S., Barnes, J. V. B., & Fitzgerald, H. F. (2020, September 9). Addressing Inequities in Education: Considerations for American Indian and Alaska Native Children and Youth in the Era of COVID-19 | Society for Research in Child Development SRCD. Society for Research in Child Development. <https://www.srcd.org/research/addressing-inequities-education-considerations-american-indian-and-alaska-native-children>
6. Human Rights Watch. (2021, March 2). Submission on the Rights of the Indigenous Child. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/02/submission-rights-indigenous-child>
7. Edelman, A. E. (2021, May 23). Congress could spend big on broadband. Tribal nations say it can't come soon enough. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/joe-biden/congress-could-spend-big-broadband-tribal-nations-say-it-can-n1267923>
8. COVID-19 disproportionately impacts Native youth, leaves children without caregivers. (2021, October 14). Charkoosta News. http://www.charkoosta.com/news/covid-19-disproportionately-impacts-native-youth-leaves-children-without-caregivers/article_bdce3404-2d1b-11ec-8816-b3f992ae1e2b.html
9. NIHCM. (2021, November 18). The Pandemic's Impact on Children: COVID Vaccinations & Mental Health. <https://nihcm.org/publications/the-pandemics-impact-on-children-covid-vaccinations-mental-health>
10. National Indian Health Board. (2022, March 10). Special News for Indian Country: COVID-19 Vaccines for Native Youth. NIHB. <https://www.nihb.org/covid-19/updates/special-news-for-indian-country-covid-19-vaccines-for-native-youth/#:%7E:text=Special%20News%20for%20Indian%20Country%3A%20COVID%2D19%20Vaccines%20for%20Native%20Youth,-January%2018%2C%202022&text=To%20our%20Partners%20in%20Tribal,we%20have%20against%20the%20virus.>