

# Working with American Indian and Alaska Native Individuals, Couples, and Families

June 23, 2015

## Operator

Good day, and welcome to the Resource Center webinar on “Working with American Indian and Alaska Native Individuals, Couples, and Families.” This call is being recorded. At this time, I would like to turn the conference over to Ms. Stephanie Vester. Please go ahead, ma’am.

## Stephanie Vester

Thank you. Thank you and welcome everyone to this National Resource Center webinar on Working with American Indian and Alaska Native Individuals, Couples and Families. Again, I’m Stephanie Vester. I’ll be helping with the logistics for the webinar today, along with my colleague, Jessica Otto.

Before we go ahead and get started and get to the content for today’s webinar, we’re going to go through just a few logistical items with everyone, to make sure you’re all set. The webinar today will be an hour and a half. Audio for the webinar will be broadcast through your computer, so please make sure your speakers and your volume are turned on to hear the webinar presentation. If you have any technical issues, problems seeing something or hearing something, you can send us a message in the Q-and-A pod that’s located on your screen, or call the number that is appearing on this slide. It’s 1-866-916-4672, and we’ll be sure to assist you. So again, please make sure your computer speakers are on to hear the presentation.

After the presentations today, we’ll have an online Q-and-A session. We encourage you to type in any questions that you think of at any time while the presenters are presenting by typing them in the Q-and-A pod that’s located in the bottom right-hand corner of your screen, and clicking Enter. We will collect submitted questions and then address those during the Q-and-A session at the end as time permits. If your question is for a specific presenter, we’d ask you to please reference that when typing it in, if possible.

Throughout the webinar, presenters may reference materials or links relevant to their presentation. You can browse Web links by clicking on any of the links in the Web links pod that’s located on the top right-hand corner of your screen, and you can download materials by selecting the files in the Files pod on the right-hand portion of your screen. We will also be including several poll questions throughout the webinar that we encourage you to participate in.

We are very excited for the content that will be shared on today’s webinar. The webinar agenda includes brief introductions of our presenters, an introduction to how culture plays an important role in integrating healthy marriage and relationship education into social services, an overview of the Resource Center’s free Toolkit, “Working with American Indian and Alaska Native Individuals, Couples and Families,” and two program examples from providers in the field who are implementing healthy marriage and relationship education into their services, keeping in mind cultural values. Following the presentations, as I mentioned, we’ll have a brief online Q-and-A session.

Our presenters for the webinar today include Robyn Cenizal. Robyn is the director for the National Research Center for Healthy Marriage and Families. We have Terry Cross. Terry is an enrolled member of the Seneca Nation of Indians, and is the founder and senior advisor of the National Indian Child Welfare Association. Terry has 41 years of experience in child welfare, including 10 years working directly with children and families. He serves as an adjunct faculty at Portland State University's School of Social Work, and lectures internationally on culture, racial healing, and social justice. We have Nicole Earls. Nicole is the Human Services Director for the Quileute Nation in La Push, Washington. She has worked for the Tribe since 2005 in Head Start and TANF before accepting the director position. Prior to her work in La Push, Nicole was a Teach for America member in south Texas. She has her Bachelor's Degree from the University of Puget Sound, and her Masters in Guidance and Counseling from City University. And last, but not least, we have Elaine Topsy. Elaine is the Program Director for the Chippewa Cree Tribal TANF Program. She has a Master's Degree in Counseling from Montana State University-Northern in Havre, Montana, and is certified to teach the Cree language, culture and history. She was born in Rocky Boy and has strong cultural ties with the Chippewa Cree Tribe. She has one son, three daughters, eight grandsons and five granddaughters. So, just a little bit about our presenters today, and now, Robyn, I'm going to turn it over to you to get us started with the presentations and set the context for our discussion today.

### **Robyn Cenizal**

Thanks, Stephanie. I'm happy to be here today, and thank you all for joining us. [At] the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families, our mission is connecting healthy marriage and relationship education skills and safety net service providers as part of an integrated approach to strengthening families, and the Resource Center offers an array of services and resources to support organizations who are interested in integrating relationship education skills into their programs, [and] outreach through conferences, Twitter, and our monthly newsletter. So be sure to follow us on Twitter; you'll see our hashtag down at the bottom.

We also offer stakeholder-specific products. The Toolkit that you're going to hear about today is one such product. We have a number of other culturally-specific products, as well as some other topically-specific products, so I hope that you'll visit the website and check some of those out. We also offer training and technical assistance. We have offered Integration Institutes at the state level in 22 states so far, and provide ongoing technical assistance to stakeholders who are interested in integrating relationship skills into their programming. Our robust website includes a library that has over a thousand research-based resources, and we are constantly adding new resources every month. Those resources are everything from research to practice briefs, to curricula, to tools such as the Toolkit, and fact sheets, tip sheets, things that can be used by service providers, as well as things that can be simply printed off and shared with individuals that service providers are serving.

We also have a Virtual Training Center, and currently it has six courses in it. These courses, when completed, if you pass the final exam at the end with [an] 80 percent completion rate, you will receive a Certificate of Completion, and these certificates can

be submitted for CEUs, should your organization require CEUs. So I think you'll definitely want to check that out. They are all free, and they're all research-based.

We also have a Media Gallery with videos and podcasts. Some interesting podcasts that are out there -- one on family violence prevention; we also have one on working with African-American individuals, so lots of interesting stuff out there. The videos are very nice, brief ways to capture and share information, so feel free to share links to those videos with individuals within your organization. All the archived webinars are located on the Resource Center website, as will this webinar be archived and placed on that website. It takes usually two to three weeks for this to happen, for the process to complete itself and to show up there, so if you know someone who's missing today's webinar, they will have a chance to see it later.

When we talk about healthy marriage education skills, what we're really focusing on are four core components, and they are interpersonal skills, such as communication and conflict resolution [sic]. These are important communication skills, because these are skills that are not only important within the context of family, whether you're talking about couple relationships or parent-child relationships, or even extended family relationships, but these are also the skills that transfer to the workplace and can be the make-or-break skills when it comes to getting and maintaining employment. We also focus on critical skills like parenting and financial education, because those two issues are the number-one stressors that impact families across socioeconomic lines, but can be more stressful for low-resource families who may not have the coping skills or the resources to address some of these concerns. The other thing about these four skills is that, when you think about integrating them into programming, they can be integrated individually or collectively as part of a more structured curriculum, so they're easy to integrate. For example, if your organization already offers parenting, you might want to add financial education.

When we talk about integration, we think very holistically about all of the social services that families across the country are taking advantage of. By integrating relationship skills in a non-punitive way in locations where families are already accessing services, it increases the likelihood that families will take advantage of these skills. If you don't learn these skills in your family of origin, many times there is not a place to learn these skills, so integrating them where they are readily available, and again, in a non-punitive way so that they are strength-based and they support families in gaining these skills before it becomes a crisis, that's kind of what we really are trying to promote.

Fostering cultural competency, we think, is extremely important when serving families. It's not enough just to be reflective of the community you're trying to serve; it's important to understand the nuances of that community. So we have created a series of culturally-competent resources through the Resource Center. It's important to think about relationship education being integrated in ways that are culturally appropriate, because culture is so important. It affects how individuals and families pass on values, behaviors and attitudes generationally, and also shapes how people view the world and their relationships, and influences how individuals behave within their romantic relationships. So we're going to focus today on the American Indian and Alaska Native Individuals, Couples and Families Toolkit, but we do have, as I mentioned, some other culturally-

specific resources that are available on the Resource Center website, so I hope you'll take advantage of those if you work with other populations as well.

One caveat that I'd like to mention: Today you're going to hear some really good ideas, but it's important to know that if you happen to be working in an organization that's federally funded -- for example, through a Healthy Marriage or Responsible Fatherhood grant, or re-entry grant -- it's going to be important for you to take back any great ideas that you hear to your Project Officer to make sure that those ideas can be implemented as allowable activities under your current funding. Different funding structures allow for different things, and you just want to make sure that we're all mindful of that.

With that, I'm going to turn you over to Terry Cross, who is the lead author on our Native American Toolkit.

**Terry Cross**

Thank you, and I think we're going to start with a poll.

**Stephanie Vester**

We have a quick poll question for participants on the line that we'd like you to vote on -- a yes or no question: "Do you currently work with American Indian and/or Alaska Native Individuals, Couples and Families as part of your service provision?" Yes or no?

*[Pause]*

Great. We'll give you a couple of more minutes. Great -- so it looks like most of you do, about 75 percent.

**Terry Cross**

Great. Well, thank you. Just by way of introduction, I want to talk a little bit about the diversity of tribes, the things that I'm going to be presenting today. It's always a dilemma to try to present things from an overall point of view, but I want to make sure that we preface these remarks by saying tribes are diverse. There are regional cultures. Tribes are also diverse because of the impact of colonialism, and the way that history unfolded in different locations. Even tribal communities are themselves diverse internally, the range of assimilated versus traditional -- we're going to talk a little bit more about that. And the people who are enrolled in tribes span the racial spectrum, and so people may look any -- different, diverse ways that could be presented, and so, 'just want to make sure, as we're starting this conversation, we're aware of that diversity.

The purpose of the Toolkit is to make sure that we're able to educate providers and to increase the level of collaboration. One of the ways that this Toolkit might be used -- if you're a tribal program and you're working in collaboration with other service providers, the Toolkit can provide the basis for some training or conversations, and it would be important to adapt it locally with the impact of, for example, the historic information that's in it, and to add specific information about your community. We're hoping that this opens the conversation.

We want to maximize providers that are non-Native, their recruitment and retention of American Indian families, and to look at the impact of the services that they provide for the Indian population in their service area. Also, the Toolkit is designed to encourage the integration of healthy marriage and relationship skills into existing services, and to do

that in a way that is congruent with American Indian cultures so that the services are meaningful.

Now, I'll say a little bit more about who might use the Toolkit before I move on. It can be used by non-Native service providers who want to use it to learn about working not only with families and individuals, but working with tribes as well. It also can be used by tribal programs who want to use it as a tool to help educate partners. It also could be used by tribes to educate their non-Native staff, any new staff unfamiliar with the history and policy issues. So we hope it's a Toolkit that everyone can use.

The Toolkit is a reference guide to better understand history and its impact on service systems, and the way that people seek help, and to understand the social conditions, the challenges that might be there for service agencies. We hope that it's also a reference guide for helping understand American Indian values, and how they might impact the use of services, and increase the awareness of cultural identity, and the variety of cultural identity as it has to do with assimilation so to not treat American Indians in a stereotypical fashion, thinking that everybody's the same, but to honor that diversity within, to improve our capacity for collaboration. We're going to talk a little bit about something called the Touchstones of Hope that describes how to work effectively in collaboration between tribes and mainstream organizations and service agencies. We hope that this is a guide that provides some learning strategies to integrate the healthy marriage and relationship skills into our service delivering.

There are several topics that are covered in the Toolkit, and the rest of our presentation will then go into each one of these. You see the seven areas -- the historical background, the impact of that history today -- It is not just an interesting history, or challenging history, but it has implications every day in the work that we do. So to understand that history in today's context, this second section takes a look at what that means for the work that we do. Part of that history has created a service system that's very complex, and we'll take a look at that. Then we'll look at the cultural considerations as a section that examines the cultural issues that a provider might need to know something about. There's a section on family issues, which really describes the challenges that our families face, and the issues in our communities; we'll take a look at that. There's a guide for engaging families, as I had mentioned, that can be organized around the Touchstones of Hope, and finally, a section on integration of healthy marriage and relationship education.

The historical background chapter is organized [in] significant historical eras to inform the user, the reader, about key concepts that shape Indian Country and the Indian experience today. The first era is the Pre-Colonial Period, and it is, of course, the time before European settlement, from the time of Columbus' arrival through the early 1600s. There was very little contact. This is a period we can look at to see the cultural strengths, the health. There were strong governmental and social structures that were in place, clan structures. It points us to things that still exist in our communities, like strong extended family networks, the natural helping systems, the importance of elders, all of the things that have been with us for generations that we learned as ways to sustain ourselves that are still with us, and we still rely on these strengths.

The Colonial Period -- the importance of the recognition of tribal sovereignty, because tribes in this Colonial Period, because of treaty making, were recognized as nations. In this period that lasted from the early 1600s through the founding of the United States in the late 1700s, there was a power balance, a military power balance, and American Indian tribes were treated as nations and written into our Constitution. Treaties were written, laws written about how governments can deal with tribes. It shapes today the way that tribal governments are regarded as dependent nation-states within the United States, having a similar limited sovereignty as the states, and says a lot about tribal-state relations that are covered also in the curriculum.

The Period of Removal and Genocide was a fairly short era of history, from the early 1800s to about 1870. Most familiar to most people is the Trail of Tears, but also devastation of food supplies, disease, the loss of approximately 10 million people in about 50 years, and the tremendous impact of that on the historic trauma and intergenerational grief that we'll talk about in a few minutes.

The Period of Assimilation -- the official government policy of kill-the-Indian, save-the-man; the Boarding School era; the Dawes Act and several pieces of legislation from the late 1800s right up through the 1950s with termination, Public Law 280 and the relocations; and of course, the Trans-Racial Adoption era -- ending with the self-determination and the return to self-governance and the growth of tribal capacity to provide our own services, and the importance now of government-to-government relations in determining services and relationships and providing services for tribal citizens.

The next section is on the impact of that history -- the implications of that history -- the importance of the historic distrust, the relationships between tribal communities and the non-Native communities, the reluctance to become involved cross-culture in many situations because of unresolved trauma. We cover the Dawes Act, also known as the Allotment Act, and its impact on membership in tribes, and the creation of identity issues. Never before the Dawes Act did tribes have blood quantum requirements, and this is a federal law that established that blood quantum issue. The impact on the identity on federal policies and the history, the assimilation process, the historic and intergenerational trauma and grief -- there's some examples shared about families and how trauma can be transferred from generation to generation. We looked at family relationships and the impact on those, where Indian people live, and the diversity and complexity of the service network based on that history.

The next section does deal with that complex service network, and it looks at what safety net providers need to keep in mind: the role of tribal courts, particularly around child support, child custody, divorce and child welfare, other civil matters; and working with Indian families -- they need to communicate and coordinate with tribal programs -- and the complexity of those of that service delivery system.

The next consideration is the cultural consideration -- first of all, getting back to the issue of diversity, the importance of understanding that, as Indian people, we exist on a continuum all the way from very, very traditional, speaking indigenous language and practicing traditional beliefs, all the way to people who are very, very assimilated, who have not had the opportunity to learn their culture, to know much about their culture,

sometimes raised outside of the culture in foster care or adoption, and every conceivable combination in between.

The next chapter is on the family issues -- the history that I've talked about, the devastation of male roles, the impact of boarding schools on parenting, the impact of historic trauma and family violence and child maltreatment. A lot of data is provided in description. We take a look at the instance of poverty and the impact of poverty, also substance misuse, the untreated trauma. But we don't just look that the doom and gloom. This section also includes a look at the resiliency factors, how we've been able to survive against tremendous odds, and the importance of cultural identity and reliance on those indigenous ways of helping, of our family structures, of our practices of staying healthy, and the importance of our kinship structures, and the family strengths that we maintain despite these very difficult historic issues.

The next section is on engaging American Indian and Alaska Native families and services. In it, we outline the Touchstones of Hope as guiding values. The Touchstones of Hope were developed in 2005 at an international convening of indigenous and mainstream leaders who identified a key set of values that should underlie any service delivery to indigenous families, not only in the United States, but across the world. There are several values that are the underpinning of the Touchstones. Self-determination -- that we indigenous people are in the best position to know what's good for them, and making sure that as we're approaching the work that it is collaborative, that American Indian people are in charge of their own lives. That culture is a resource, and language is an important aspect of that culture, so that the service provision has to enhance culture and language as a function of helping people. That the approaches should be holistic, supporting the whole person. That structural interventions -- in other words, dealing with issues of poverty, housing, substance misuse and mental health all have to be addressed in an environment which is non-discriminatory. In other words, access to service and equity is an important issue in delivering the services.

Finally, we have a section on integration of healthy relationships. We base this section on some research that was conducted by NICWA and the Native Wellness Institute, looking at native couples across the country, and asking, what is a healthy native relationship? In just a few items we sorted around the four-quadrant circle we call the Relational World View Model -- Mind, Body, Spirit and Context. Just one example from each of those areas -- there's a couple of examples. In the Mind quadrant, a healthy native couple has good communication skills, uses humor and finds joy in their relationship, and having skills of caring for one another. In the physical, the Body quadrant, the holistic intimacy, an intimacy that comes with supporting one another in having a relationship that is based in joy and mutual caring. The positive shared values and practices in that Spirit quadrant. Finally, in that Context quadrant, environment quadrant, being of service to one another in community. And this was unique. It crossed all of the literature we reviewed about healthy relationships. Several of these items were not included in what the mainstream defines as a healthy relationship, so there are some specific cultural values with regard to healthy relationships that are important for us to maintain.

Finally, as we look at integration of the healthy marriage and relationship education with the safety net, there's material on the important relationship skills, the benefits for children and youth, community benefits, and the reduced family stress. These are a summation of each of the sections. We hope that the Toolkit can be used to help with planning and reaching out to partners as a catalyst for dialogue and discussion so that the importance of engaging tribes can't be underestimated. The most important aspect of working and serving tribal communities is to work collaboratively with tribal governments and Indian non-profits to make sure that services are community-based whenever possible. We hope the Toolkit will inform social marketing and outreach, and inform the service designs of safety net agencies. We provide examples of how services can be co-located so that they're most effective. And there's a section on communication tips, and how to deal with them over the cross-cultural communication mismatches that can occur because of different world views or different cultural languages.

I'm going to hand it off now to Nicole for discussion from her community.

### **Nicole Earls**

Thank you, Terry. I think I'm going to click the next slide -- there we are. I am Nicole Earls. I'm the Human Services Director of the Quileute Tribe, and we are in La Push in Washington, right on the ocean on the peninsula. This talk is about our youth and family programs, and how we are currently applying the Toolkit, and how, moving forward, we hope to do this more in our community. And we have a poll question.

### **Stephanie Vester**

Okay, I will go ahead and pull up that poll question. This question is, "If you work in an area that services tribal members, do you serve multiple tribes? Yes or no?"

*[Pause]*

I'll give everyone a couple more seconds, but it looks like a majority of people are saying yes -- so, over 80 percent, and I guess we're down to, 78 percent say yes, they serve multiple tribes.

### **Nicole Earls**

Okay, thank you. I started out with posting our mission, our vision statement that our Department of Human Services currently has. This was good for me in practice after going through the Toolkit to look at our mission and vision as it was developed in 2008. Our Department had worked -- and we really spent a lot of time talking about this -- but over the years, our Department has changed a lot. We've added new programs and new services, and these statements now, we've said some of those catchphrases -- culturally sensitive, we want to enhance the lives of our individuals and families and the integrity of our relationships -- but some of it that we said, we didn't really understand, I think, back then what we needed to do. And the ways that we have changed in our department over the years and in our partnerships really has us looking at this, and thinking that this might be the time for us to revisit our mission and vision statement and update things, and make sure that this is really how we're providing services and how we want the community to see our mission and our vision. This was good practice for me to look at this and think internally, how are we doing and could we do better?

I also included the vision of our youth and family program. We are the TANF ICW collaboration grantees. We're in our ninth year. At some point towards the end of our first five-year grant, we developed our vision of a low teen pregnancy rate, where our youth have good decision-making skills and are actively engaged in our culture, their educational success and career planning. And we wanted to develop a community with a high capacity for effective parenting, where we could help end some of those destructive multi-generational cycle[s] that, as from Terry's presentation and historically looking at tribal communities, have really been a challenge in helping families find that cohesiveness again and learn how to parent. We, as the service providers, need to know how to support that, and how to develop and provide services that allow for creating parent-child relationships that are strong, and really look at our services and make sure that we aren't contributing to more destruction in the family, because I think sometimes we get caught up and we accidentally do that. We want to make sure that we are just as aware, and that we are doing the best. Yet this vision was the impetus for us to really start focusing on providing healthy relationship education in all different areas as often as possible.

The program goals of the Youth and Family Programs weren't just about healthy relationship education, but I think in a way, we fell back on that. When we first started we were looking at, we want kids to graduate, we want families to not have repeat removal with ICW. But what it all really comes back down to, it is that healthy relationship -- giving kids the tools and the understanding to enter into their own healthy relationship, helping the parents develop healthy relationships with their children, help the family to become a healthier family unit. So, even with these goals, we realized that everything we were doing was around healthy relationship education.

One of the activities that we provide every month, that was so popular for a while we were doing them twice a month, is our Mom's Lunches. We've combined funds through our Youth and Family program and our TANF, and we hold hour-long lunches for local moms. We had some dads who were raising very young kids, single dads, and they said well, why can't we attend? And we said, of course you can. We shouldn't really call this Mom's Lunch. The name has stuck, but we welcome anyone who's parenting a child from birth to five. We have a speaker who comes and presents on a topic to offer information. There's a lot of good discussion that goes on at these Mom's Lunches. It's really more of a learning environment. We're not there to hand out, this is how it is, this is how you have to parent. It really is about, this is a learning experience for all of us; none of us exactly do the right thing, but here are some tools, here are people you can talk to, and here's a safe place to come and ask questions. We provide a healthy lunch, and we give a gift package for everyone, and I think that was the biggest factor in getting really good attendance, but we've got moms that have really good memories of their Mom's Lunches when they were first starting out.

We also offer Family Fun Night. Once a month we hold a dinner and provide activities for all families in the community. The community of La Push is actually really small -- tribal enrollment is just around 700, but in the community, there's three or four hundred. We've had Family Nights where we've had 80 people there. That's huge for the community, so we're really proud of that, and we're really happy about that attendance. Families get information in private, and the real goal is just to show families how important it is to sit

down and eat together, to communicate with one another. It's been a really hard event for us to actually figure out how effective we are being, but if we look at attendance and just the community satisfaction, we know that we're doing a good thing, and we really hope that every month, people go home with a new skill or some knowledge.

In a different program, our New Beginnings Domestic Violence Program, there is a grant for an Elder and Youth Healthy Relationship Building. It's a collaboration between the New Beginnings and the Clinic, which is overseeing that program, and our Senior Center. We have a coordinator at the Senior Center who's working on cultural and crafts projects every week. The goal is just to have fun conversation and create an atmosphere of creativity and wellness. It's very well-attended. We really want them to be inviting their family members. We are really hoping that more teens will be able to attend in the summer, now that school's out, just to have healthy conversation about healthy relationships and some of the cultural practices. It really gives the elders an opportunity to teach the youth more about their culture.

We also have, during the school year, the youth come up from one of the classes in the Tribal School and participate in a bingo game with the elders, and they love it. That's one of our lunches where we have more elders who choose to come and eat and play bingo with the kids, and it really is a very positive atmosphere. They're just having fun and building those relationships

These are combinations of coordination between a lot of different programs, and the success factors might not be relevant for every community, but for our community, we found the biggest indicator of our success is that participants are having positive interactions. We want to make sure we have good curriculum. We want to make sure there's someone who can really facilitate and keep the topics relevant, and that our speakers are really good. But overall, we found in our surveys that when people attended an event, and there were both positive interactions and they were learning more about healthy relationships and communications, they were more satisfied when they left than if the event was missing something in that.

A lot of the work that we do is really centered around our partnership. For our community in Quileute, we are very lucky that we all actively work together and collaborate. That's something that's been handed down from our leadership. But also, I've got amazing staff. I have got people who are willing to just get out there and do what needs to be done and work together. This is a list of all of the programs at the tribe that work together in one way or another. Then in the town of Forks, which is about 20 minutes away, a lot of the school district works with us. The Forks Abuse Program works with us. We attend the Readiness to Learn consortium, which is a group of service providers in the area who get together and just talk about, how can we help kids and families? What services do we have available?

I am blessed to work in a community that has that real push for partnership, and I know it's not always the same. I have visited other communities where a lot of these programs, the TANF program, the Abuse program, and the Child Welfare program, are very siloed, and they work very separately from one another. We have found that the best way to reach families, the best way to get that healthy relationship education out there, is to break down those silos and really focus on working together. We've been very lucky. We

don't even have to document it anymore. We do the documentation to have the paperwork, but we went out originally and were creating these very detailed MOUs and Letters of Agreement, and now we automatically fall into that, that we're going to work together, and we call each other up, and we work together.

One of the things that I wanted to really stress about how the Toolkit fits into tribal programming -- We serve all federally-recognized tribal members in a lot of our services and programs that we provide, and I originally opened this Toolkit and thought, I don't know, maybe this is for service providers who aren't on a tribal reservation, or for someone who doesn't work with that many tribal members. But really, it was a good wake-up call for me, and a good reminder. You know, we are not all the same. That just kept going through my mind when I was looking at the Toolkit and developing this PowerPoint. To go back to Terry's mention of diversity, we are a Quileute program, but we serve a lot of different tribal members. We're not all the same, even though we're a Quileute program. The culture among every family and individual varies. That glossary in this Toolkit is a great reference for us. We really do run that range just in our small community of traditional to assimilated, and knowing that when developing our programs, that every person and every family is going to have a slightly different need and a slightly different take is important. We're not all the same, and we, as tribal workers, have the responsibility to actively educate and advocate among all of our partners.

That makes our jobs even more complex, I think. Sometimes, when I go to a local meeting, or a state meeting or a federal meeting, I'm having to remind them, this is how it is at Quileute, but that's not how it is at the neighboring tribes, so you have to talk to them. Talking to me doesn't count. And again saying, I'm just a tribal worker, I'm a director, but I'm not a tribal member, so you have to talk to the Council. You need to get their blessing in some of these decisions. So, really advocating and developing that relationship and, from my perspective -- Washington State has been a great state to work with, for the most part, but we're always pushing that we can get better. We can always get better. We're not all the same, and we really have to check ourselves constantly. I have different values and expectations than someone I grew up with in the community, and I have to remember to not place my values on them. Are we minimizing their experiences? So asking ourselves those questions is always valuable, no matter where we work.

Then, moving forward, the future steps that we plan to take, we do plan to update our mission and vision statement. We need to get back into improving how we document our partnerships. Just as a side note, this past year I've had a lot of reminders about really focusing on the children and the families, and doing what's best for them. When leadership changes or a program director changes, sometimes there's tension, and we have to say, hey, this is how we all work together. Even when we don't agree and we have different philosophies, the unwritten statement in our department is, we always work together for the good of the families in the community, even when we don't agree. We've had a good time to put that in practice since last year, but we're going to continue to train. We're going to look at developing training sessions that align with this Toolkit. We always want to be more responsive. We always want to make sure we're incorporating the culture in our programming to the best of our ability, and that we

continue to grow and improve. This Toolkit came out at a good time for us. We're in another growth stage in our department, and I appreciate everyone being here to listen to this. If you ever have any questions, feel free to contact me.

I think now I'm handing it over to Elaine.

### **Elaine Topsy**

Okay, thank you. My name is Elaine Topsy, and I work with the Chippewa Cree Tribal TANF Program -- that's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families -- and I've been there since 2004, when the program started. On the slide, you'll see where we're located at. This is a map of Montana. You'll see that there are these reservations in Montana, and we're the smallest. You can barely see us on the map. We're 40 miles from the Canadian border, so we have relatives, and we go back and forth from Canada to Montana. So that's where we are.

The intent of the TANF Program is to provide services to those families that are eligible, and there's a lot of paperwork involved. Some of the barriers that we have for our clients are, they come to us -- they may be high school dropouts, and that's one of the main barriers. Another main barrier is the driver's license. There are many young people that do not have [a] driver's license. The population in Montana, or in Rocky Boy -- we have about 3,300 -- over 3,000 enrolled members that live in Rocky Boy, and about a quarter of that population are 25 years and younger, so we have a very young population. The work that we do in the teen pregnancy prevention and education is big -- it's a big part of our program. We promote two-parent family activities as much as we can. If it's Family Nights, we have Father's Day activities. We have many activities, and in everything that we do, we include culture. All of these areas will include speakers that come in, and we get our history on who we are as Chippewa Cree people.

The main focus of TANF is to guide people towards self-sufficiency, and one of the tools that we use in our programs is the Neiyahw Ojibewa Positive Parenting Program. This is a parenting program that we developed, and we used the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) parenting program model. We had a group of people that just met regularly; we would put in our values in the model, and we use it in our parenting program now. It's a very good model, and for anybody that can refer to it, we have our values on paper. We have oral tradition, and there are many people who do not have access to someone to tell them about when a baby is born, the dating of the child.

So we have it all detailed out in the lessons in our parenting program. In our parenting program we hold once a week, we have those lessons from one to eight. We have meals, door prizes, and elder speakers come in to reinforce part of the lesson that's being talked about. The first one is Traditional Parenting. What is Traditional Parenting? We can't live in the past, but we want to know where we came from. We're a pretty new reservation in Rocky Boy. The people that did not have a home, that did not agree to the treaties in the 1800s and the Chippewa, came together. Congress, by executive action, provided a home for these people because they were two bands of Indians that did not have a home. The Chippewa came from the Great Lakes area, and the Cree were around the Plains area. That's how Rocky Boy came to be.

When we have these parenting sessions, we talk about those values and, like the other speakers said, we're a very diverse people. We cannot say, this is my way -- this is how you should take care of your child. We cannot say that. We can offer the tools, by using the Toolkit or using this parenting curriculum that we have. This is the meaning of the child, this is the meaning of the moss bag. This is a moss bag that we have to wrap the baby in, and there are other tribes that use a cradle board. But there's a meaning in why we wrap the babies up, and that is explained to the young parent. I can mention that when we had an active parenting program, there were young people that walked to class because of the support that was offered there, and some of the few items that would help them just to be there, like a box of wash soap -- something like that that could help them in their daily life -- and also an elder that would talk to them about what it means to be a parent, what it means to be a woman or a man, and what they can do to be in that role. So the teachings are powerful in how to take care of their baby, and take care of their baby together.

That was the Traditional Parenting part. Some of the areas that the people are very hungry about is, people want to have an Indian name, but they're not exactly sure what that means, and how to go about the protocol in doing that, and this is where people help them. Right now we're helping people with the initiation into the dance arena. There's also passage rites to that, and the meaning of why people do that. We had a person come in and talk to the parents about the meaning of that, and then we have classes to help parents make those dance clothes. If they're interested, when we get to the pow wow in August, there's a Children's Day where they have the time set aside for the parents and the children if they want to go through that passage rite.

And we get to the poll question.

**Stephanie Vester**

I think now we have a poll question. We will go ahead and put that up for everybody.

*[Pause]*

The question is, "In Montana, approximately how many grandparents are raising their grandchildren without parental involvement?"

**Elaine Topsky**

That's over 6,000.

*[Pause]*

**Stephanie Vester**

Okay, we'll go ahead and hide that question. Okay, Elaine, you can go ahead.

**Elaine Topsky**

Okay. We have state meetings with our Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, and the GRG has a regular newsletter out for those branches of GRG groups that we have, and we have one in Rocky Boy that's under the college system, under the Extension Department. We have an active GRG group in Rocky Boy, and for our TANF program, we fluctuate about 150 cases a month, and a quarter of those cases are Grandparents Raising Grandchildren caregiver cases. A lot of times, most of the time I would say, the grandparents are taking care of the grandchildren not by choice, but because they have

to, and there are reasons. The parents could be incarcerated, Social Services may have been involved, there could be illness or death, even. But it's a role that grandparents have taken on, and they're valuable in being able to take care of their children. Some of the support that we give the grandparents and the caregivers are -- we can't solve their problems, but we can only offer support, and sometimes that's through meetings, and knowing that we're not alone.

Some of the areas, though, that the grandparents help their children is promoting that spirituality that we all need, and offering learning of the language, talking to the children about language and about life, respect in many ways, and the knowledge of life, and also to never give up. No matter where the child is that we're taking care of, and it's me too -- I take care of my grandchildren -- to let them know to never give up. Those are the core values that we hold tight to.

In our tribal TANF Program, guiding our people to self-sufficiency is one of the most important areas, and the way we do that is through the Work Readiness Program, and through job preparation and those other supportive job skills -- teaching the people how to cook, even; how to take care of a house -- if they're not really knowledgeable about how to go about doing minor repairs, what to look for in the home, like changing the filters. We have a partnership with all of our departments in Rocky Boy, and one of them is Housing. They'll come in and they'll help the clients with weatherization and give out materials for how to weatherize the doors and windows. Some of the clients may have an aptitude in that area and could do small repairs, and they could offer them job opportunities and have programs to go out and do weatherization for the elders.

Some of the areas that we have is -- we're very lucky in that we have the education starting from early daycare all the way to post-secondary education, and they're all headed by tribal members. Our Rocky Boy School Superintendent is a tribal member, and that was from K to 12, and our college is a tribal member, and those boards are also filled by tribal members. Those are the key people in our communities, and we work well with our interpartnerships with them.

One of the programs that we work with and we helped develop is a program that you could find on the Internet -- it's *Workin' It Out*. It's a soft skills program that helps people with conflict in the workplace, personal beliefs, and I have that Internet address there. But we developed that to fit our people, and it's called *Workin' with Tradition*. While we did that, we included scenarios with our people, with Native people, and it's really cool. We have whole verses -- the way some of those ideas that we have, we don't really know about feelings and physical changes. Being in survival mode, sometimes we just come out fighting if someone tells us, maybe gives us direction; but as Indian people, we may not be used to taking direction. So that's covered in the *Workin' with Tradition* handbook. Native American figures are included in the workbook, and it's really nice. People like it.

Some of the goals that we have in there -- building self-esteem by reinforcing who we are as Indian people. In Rocky Boy, we're isolated. We're 30 miles from the nearest town, and that could be a key factor in having our culture and our language intact, but it also could be a way that has hurt us. We have the media that has had a negative impact on our young people. The young people live in this dimension in the computer, and on

the Internet, or on Facebook. The young people are going to all these programs, so they're constantly looking at their gadgets to a point where you try to have dinner with somebody, and they're looking at their phone instead of talking to you. We talk a lot about that, and we have to address it in our own families of how we can put those away so we could talk more to each other, because communication is so important in our beliefs in who we are. Those are the things that we work on strengthening and to improve the organization skills, communication skills, and how people can address life in their daily lives.

A sample lesson I have here is, it's harder when we don't know where to start, and that's a personal goal. Goal setting begins by thinking big, and some of those ways are pretty hard because of where we may come from, from our home environment. Some of those things may not have been a goal in some of our families, and so those personal goals we cover with our young people, and we'll have another big opportunity for that in our Summer Youth Employment Program. We will have people coming in and talking to the young people about some of those values, and how to separate the personal family, the cultural values, and working at the work readiness, life skills, and thinking about a career for themselves -- a realistic career, and not something like, I want to be an NBA player, because not everybody has that kind of a skill or talent. Drugs and alcohol are a huge concern in our community, and the denial that's going on, the lack of trust, and sometimes not knowing what's real, because of the home environment again.

So the other answers that we talk to our families about is that meaning of integrity, honesty and respect and loving one another, praying and -- The Chippewa Cree are known for their hospitality. The people that come through Rocky Boy, especially during the pow wow, were known for being very hospitable if you come to us, and we like to see people. We have a lot of giveaways because there's a very high meaning in what we do, and that's why there's so much of it during our pow wows [and] in other ways, too, throughout the year, giving things away and helping each other. Like I say, the media, and some of the breakdown in our families is kind of getting lost in that, so the last time we had the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren meeting, we talked a lot about that. Some of the young people not really communicating what our cultural values are, what they mean to us in a contemporary setting. The young people are not hearing that. That was a concern that we talked about there.

The people are willing to share what they know, and one of the most important areas is the people wanting to donate their time during the Summer Youth Employment Program, which half a day will be filled with cultural activities, and the other half will be the life skills and the educational part of it. Some of those areas we tell the young people is, this is how you can be useful. This is what you can do. You can clean your yard. You can make simple repairs and clean your house. Get involved in the community. If you don't know how to go to a sweat -- because some people don't know how to go in that door if they want to get involved -- well, find a friend and go to that ceremony so they can join their family, so they can have an idea of what goes on in the ceremony.

There was a couple at the GRG that said that they would donate their time at our Summer Youth Employment Program. They said they would set up their teepee. They have furnishings inside, they have the back rests and the buffalo robe, and they're going

to set that up and talk to the young people about the boys' roles, the girls' roles, and what it means to be married in those kind of roles. They have pipes. They're willing to share all their teachings that we have, so I'm going to take them up on it. I'm partnering with Rocky Boy School, and they're letting us use the facilities there for youth, and we're planning on having 100 youth.

Some of the summer activities we've had that we've found have been successful is the Driver's License Boot Camp. We offer that, and it's open to the community. We have a \$500 incentive. It's in gift certificate form. But there's so many people driving without a driver's license. And the same thing with the HiSet; that's the old GED program. We'll have a boot camp there, too. We've had really good success in those two boot camps, and then we'll have the Summer Youth Employment Program. We're planning a Subsidized Employment program. It'll be only for five people, but those five people will be the ones who are work-ready from our department. And one time we're going to have an intensive driver's license class. These are TANF clients that do not have a driver's license and have fines, so we are going to do that.

Our Swim Trip, we've had up to five buses. The only requirement is that the parents or guardians go with their children, and it's huge. I've talked about the girls' groups, the boys' groups, and the dance regalia making -- there's a special project there, they call it the Medicine Dance, and that's the jingle dress -- and we're going to offer that at the pow wow, at a special time for the medicine dress and explain the meeting of that.

And that's the end of my part.

### **Stephanie Vester**

Great. Thanks, Elaine. Now you will see the slide popping up, just a reminder on how to ask a question. You can type those in the Q-and-A pod that's located on the bottom right-hand corner of your screen, and then by clicking Enter. So we'll wait just a few moments to give participants time to go ahead and submit your question, so if you do have a question, feel free to go ahead and submit that now for any of our presenters.

*[Pause]*

### **Jessica Otto**

Okay, we have one question that's come in. I think any of our presenters could answer this, but maybe we'll start with Terry. The question is, "Historical trauma has been mentioned several times as a critical cultural consideration for working with this population. Do you feel that demonstrating respect for this is the most important factor for establishing a rapport with NAIA individuals and families?"

### **Terry Cross**

Well, to make sure that your services are trauma-informed -- in other words, understanding the impact of trauma, it may be a matter of acknowledging it, but certainly understanding behaviors that you might see as a manifestation of that historic trauma. In the Toolkit, we use an example of a grandmother who was abused in boarding school who comes home and has hypersensitivity to criticism, and has developed a set of protective behaviors. Then she shelters her children, communicating that fear to the next generation. So the next generation [is] developing a set of behaviors, and interacting with a world, that are based in the mother's fear and trauma, but keep them from

engaging in healthy relationship practices. So just understanding how historic trauma is with us still today, and an intergenerational pattern, is important in that sort of story.

**Jessica Otto**

Thank you, Terry. We have another question that, I think, would be either for Elaine or for Nicole. The question is, “[Are] any of these programs also considering or integrating traditional roles of extended family members in their child rearing?”

**Nicole Earls**

This is Nicole. Absolutely. In fact, we don’t even speak to it, because we’re so used to it, but in all of our programming, we have a way to address that. We have a lot of extended family members, grandparents raising grandchildren, aunts with their nieces and nephews, and so everything we do, we offer it as family. And we don’t add a little side note that extended relatives are welcome too. We treat it as, this is the same to us as if you were the typical two-parent household. That’s how we do that. I hope that helps.

**Elaine Topsky**

This is Elaine. We have our kinship in relationship that’s very strong in our community, and the young people have gotten away from it, on what the meaning is of the uncle having responsibility and being able to discipline nieces and nephews. We have a chart [that] was developed by a language program, and so, viewing that chart and going over the kinship and the relationship and how that’s set up in a family is very helpful to people. The other thing is being able to address each other in a relationship-home way, like “Auntie” in our language, that carries more respect. Or even their sister and their brother -- those carry such in-depth meaning in our tribe when you talk about your brother, the respect you have of your brother. Covering that kinship in those words helps develop that meaning how everything is tied together, related in our Indian way -- the air and everything. So that can be a huge, huge lesson, and you can only do a little bit of it, but having that kinship chart really works.

**Jessica Otto**

Okay, thanks, Elaine. Nicole, a question for you: “Since you’ve started implementing aspects of the Toolkit, have you seen any positive outcomes or changes, such as reduction in domestic violence, lower teen pregnancies, or better parenting skills, and if so, could you talk a little bit about what you’ve seen?”

**Nicole Earls**

I’ll say that, since the Toolkit’s new, we haven’t really started implementing things in relation to that, but in the last nine years of our Youth and Family programming, and the groups that we do with the teens and the high schools, the Mom’s Lunches and the Family Fun Night, we have seen an increased graduation rate in our teens, especially those that are attending the school in Forks. We have seen a decreased teen pregnancy rate. I wouldn’t say that we’re down 100 percent, but we have definitely seen a reduction, and we are better than the national average in that dropout and that teen pregnancy rate, and before we were worse, and that’s nine years of work.

We have also seen a reduction just in the past two years -- because I’ve got some really active, very, very good ICW case workers now -- we’ve seen a reduction in the number of removals, because we’ve started to implement Family Preservation Services. I’ve got

a great FPS worker, I've got a great TANF worker, and we're seeing more services to keep families together, and so the reductions have gone down. We've had fewer removals in this last year, and that speaks volumes compared to historically what was happening. We're also being able to reunify and giving our kids more services in independent living and things like that. So we have seen some really great things. We definitely still have room for improvement, and that's what we keep saying is, there's ways that we can do more. We'd love to do more with our elders and really start to get that youth relationship with the elders more robust and learn more, like Elaine was mentioning, the family relationship. What is it? What is that for our community? I don't know, and I really want to learn. So I hope that answers the question.

**Stephanie Vester**

It definitely does. Thank you, Nicole. I think, in the interest of time, we will go ahead and wrap up, but I just wanted to remind everyone that they can download the Toolkit that we've been referencing through the webinar on the Files pod that's located on the right-hand portion of your screen. Just click on it, and then you can download that, so you'll have that in your files for reference.

That is it for today, so I just wanted to thank you all so much to the presenters for your expertise and willingness to share with us today. As the webinar concludes, there will be a brief survey that pops up on your screen, so please remember to provide your feedback using the survey, as it will help us in planning future webinars. You should see that pop up right now. And if you have any additional questions, you can send them to [info@healthymarriageandfamilies.org](mailto:info@healthymarriageandfamilies.org), and to check out more of our resources and information, you can go to our website, which is [www.healthymarriageandfamilies.org](http://www.healthymarriageandfamilies.org). So thanks again. Robyn, do you have any final closing comments?

**Robyn Cenizal**

I'd like to just say thanks again to Terry, Nicole and Elaine. It's always great to have you guys join us. You're all doing great work, and we so appreciate the work that you're doing on the ground, and we're happy at the Resource Center to support that work in any way we can. Also, to those who attended today, thank you so much again for joining us. I know we're all busy, so I appreciate you taking the time out. A reminder that you heard a lot of great ideas of things that are happening, both by Nicole and Elaine; just be sure that if you're federally funded, if you do use grant dollars to fund your program, be sure that you are checking with your federal programs specialist to make sure that whatever new ideas you hear are allowable activities under the funding that you receive. And with that, I will bid you all adieu, and thanks again.

**Operator**

That does conclude today's conference. Thank you for your participation.