



**Center for  
Native Child  
and Family Resilience**



## **The Link Between Cultural Resilience and the Prevention of Child Maltreatment in Tribal Communities**

Child Welfare League of America 2023 Conference  
Stronger Together: Uniting to Advance Change  
Workshop G7

Friday, April 28, 2023, 9:15-10:30 a.m.  
Washington, D.C.



# Opening Prayer



# Introduction



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# Center for Native Child & Family Resilience

- National Quality Improvement Center for Preventive Services and Interventions in Indian Country
  - Experts in child welfare, Indigenous communities, and evaluation
  - Promote Tribally created solutions to child maltreatment
  - Sharing information about existing programs
  - Create a first-of-its-kind Resilience-Informed Care Curriculum developed to help Tribal communities center on and build community resilience as a protective factor to child maltreatment
- Established on October 1, 2017
- 5-year grant from the Children's Bureau



# What Drove the Creation of the Initiative?

- A dream of being a part of something new, tangible and providing positive outcomes that would benefit Tribal communities, using traditional Native methods and helping those methods to work in their respective Tribal communities.
- Children's Bureau supported new directions/innovative work.

# What We Do: Our Mission

- Collaborate with Tribal Nations, communities, and community-based organizations to develop or enhance the **evidence base of culturally congruent models** of prevention and intervention services.
- Gather and disseminate **information** about **Tribally relevant practice models, interventions, and services** that contribute substantively to child maltreatment prevention efforts and family **resilience**





# What We Do: Our Approach

- Emphasize the community-grown and culturally engaged efforts to improve the resilience of communities and Nations.
- Use a culturally collaborative approach to Tribal prevention and intervention services founded upon cultural strengths throughout an array of community wellness and organizational wellness strategies.



# What We Do Differently

- Use community-based and community-collaborative evaluation models compatible with **Indigenous Ways of Knowing** to build knowledge and empower Tribal communities of care.
- Build on and increase the knowledge of effective **culturally based practices** and programs focused on the prevention and intervention of child maltreatment.
- Emphasize **culturally grounded** AI/AN child and family service programs built upon Native philosophies, community and practice-based evidence, behavioral norms, relationships and attributes as part of culturally engaged and congruent community wellness.

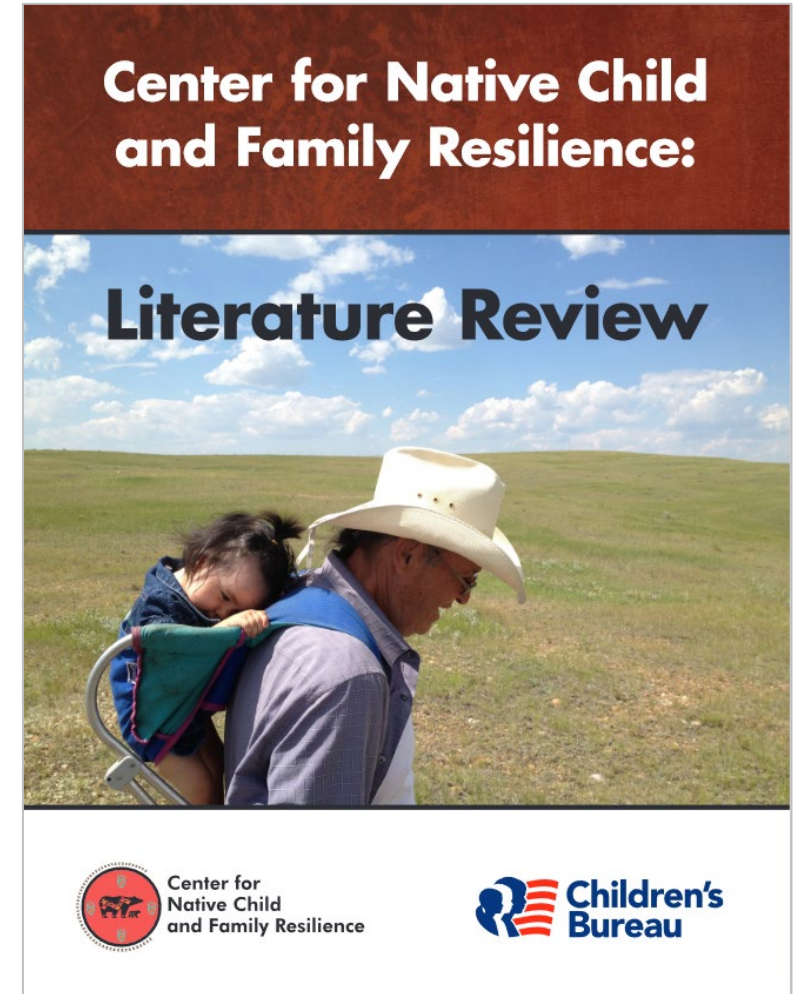


# What We Know: Culture Matters

- Experiences of Tribal communities confirm that community-based practices are often effective in enhancing family resilience and reducing risks to children.
- Culturally founded wellness models are believed to have a significant impact on the resiliency of families and community
- Resilience-based models of prevention continue to support the survivance of AI/AN people.

# What We Have Done: Literature Review

- 320 + peer-reviewed articles between 2000 and 2018.
- A central *finding*: **Culture Matters.**
  - Many of the models addressed a specific Tribal community rather than provide more generic intertribal solutions. Tribal community members also played a key role in the design and implementation of these interventions, often advising or facilitating the programs.
- A significant *limitation*: **Failure to Capture Culture as Resilience Factor**
  - The risk and protective factors were **inadequate** for capturing the function of **culture as a protective factor** unique to Indian Country.





# Cultural Resilience Factors

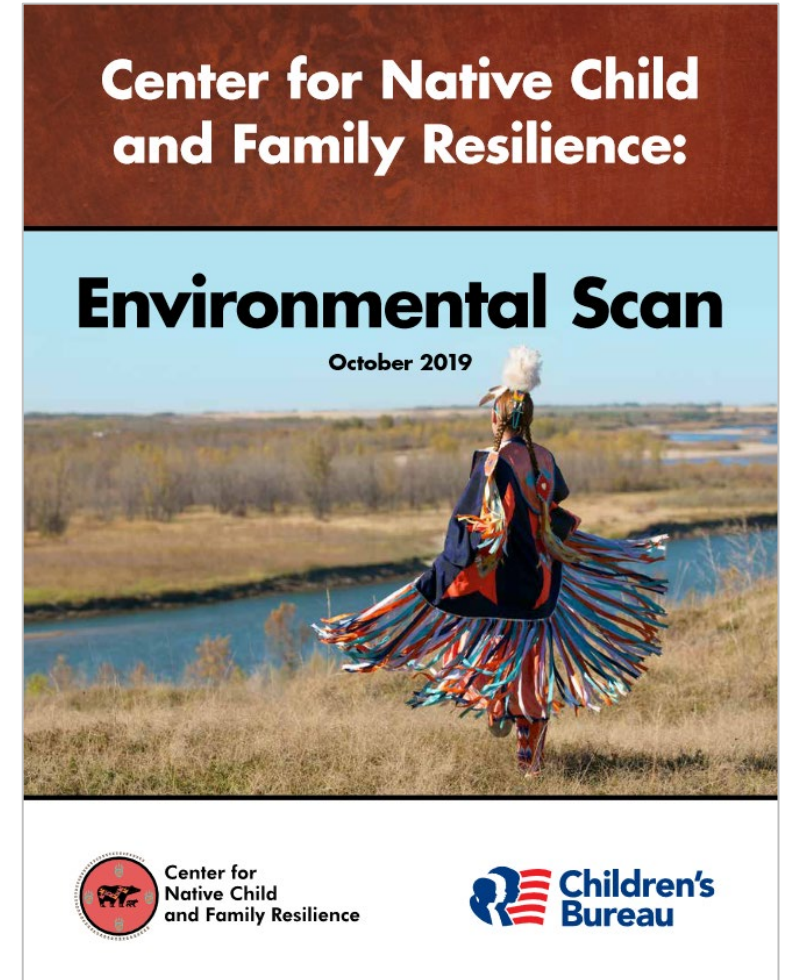
- Spiritual values/Well-being
- Spiritual practice/Knowledge/Ceremony
- Expressing Native identity
- Traditional foods/Subsistence
- Traditional healing practices
- Cultural community gatherings
- Ethnic pride/Self-esteem
- Hope/Looking forward/Optimism
- Happiness
- Increasing coping skills
- Personal capacities
- Historical trauma resilience
- Native language
- Cultural teachings
- Native humor

*What are some of your programs' cultural resilience factors?*

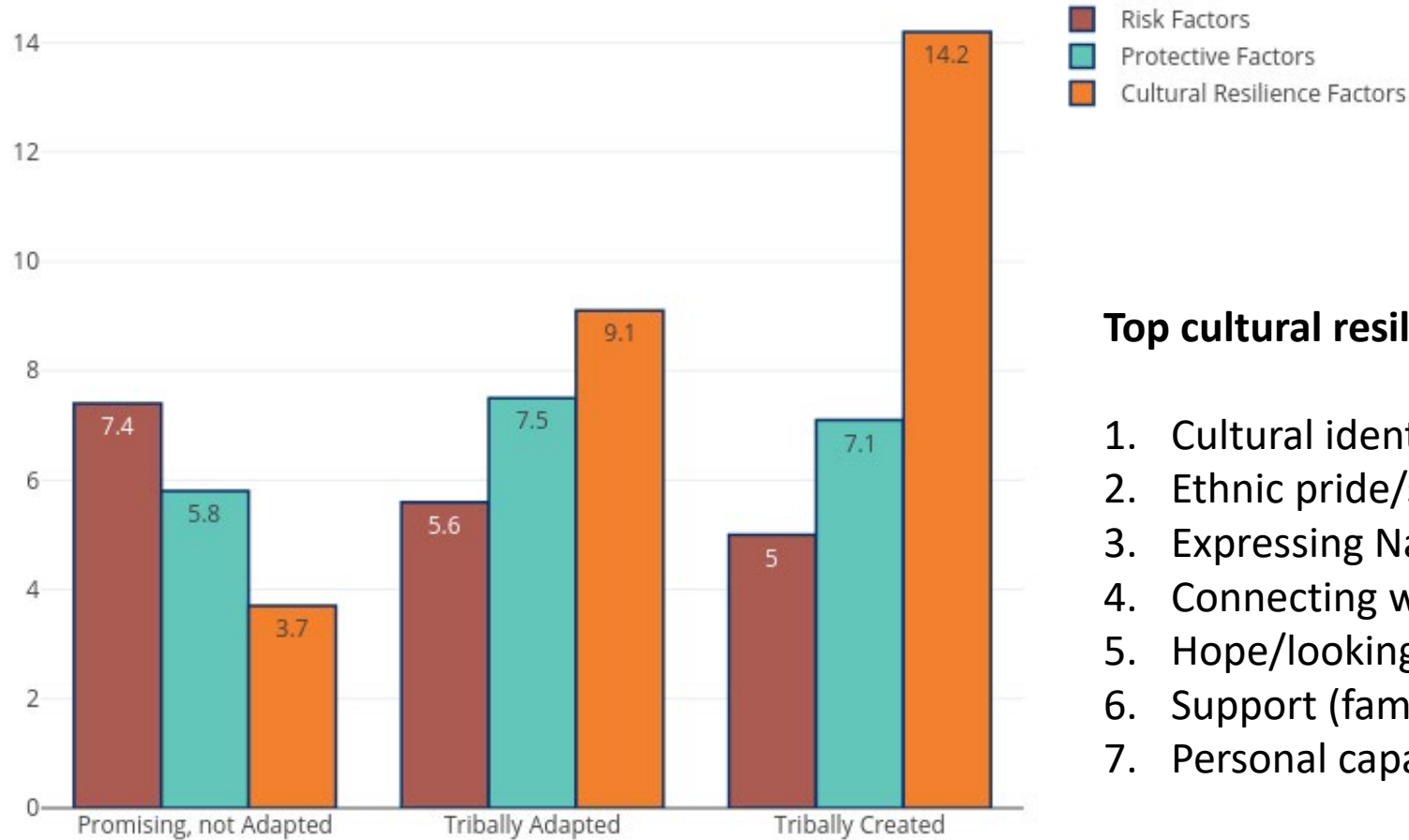


# What We Have Done: Environmental Scan

- Identified community-level research and innovative demonstrations of cultural and practice-based strategies
- A Central *finding*:
  - **Two broad categories of risk and protective factors that influence Native child and family resilience**
    1. Risk and protective factors that apply across cultures;
    2. Risk and protective factors that address the unique challenges and strengths of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) populations



# Does This Matter? Yes!



## Top cultural resilience factors (by frequency):

1. Cultural identity/Sense of belonging to cultural group
2. Ethnic pride/self-esteem
3. Expressing Native identity
4. Connecting with cultural resources
5. Hope/looking forward/optimism
6. Support (family, friends, community)/Interdependence
7. Personal capacities

# Native Solutions for Native Problems

“These are not programs that we [the Center] created. These are programs that were created at, literally, some of them at the kitchen table. They were dreams of people within the community, and that's where they started, one page at a time. So, we are ....understanding Indigenous programs and how...we evaluate those in a very different way.”

***– Center team member***



# Prevention & Intervention Programs

- Domestic Violence
- Substance Abuse & Addiction
- Healing & Wellness
- Teen Pregnancy & Parenting Skills
- Child Sexual and Physical Abuse



- Forensic Interviewing
- Case Management
- Traditional Teaching
- Ceremony
- Support Groups
- Community Referrals
- Therapeutic Interventions
- Cultural Programming
- No Wrong Door
- Breaking Down Silos to Services

# The Projects



Central Council of the  
Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes  
Tribal Family & Youth Services



COWLITZ INDIAN TRIBE



More Information:

<https://cncfr.jbsinternational.com/projects>



# Tlingit and Haida Program



Yéil Koowú Shaawát  
Raven Tail Woman

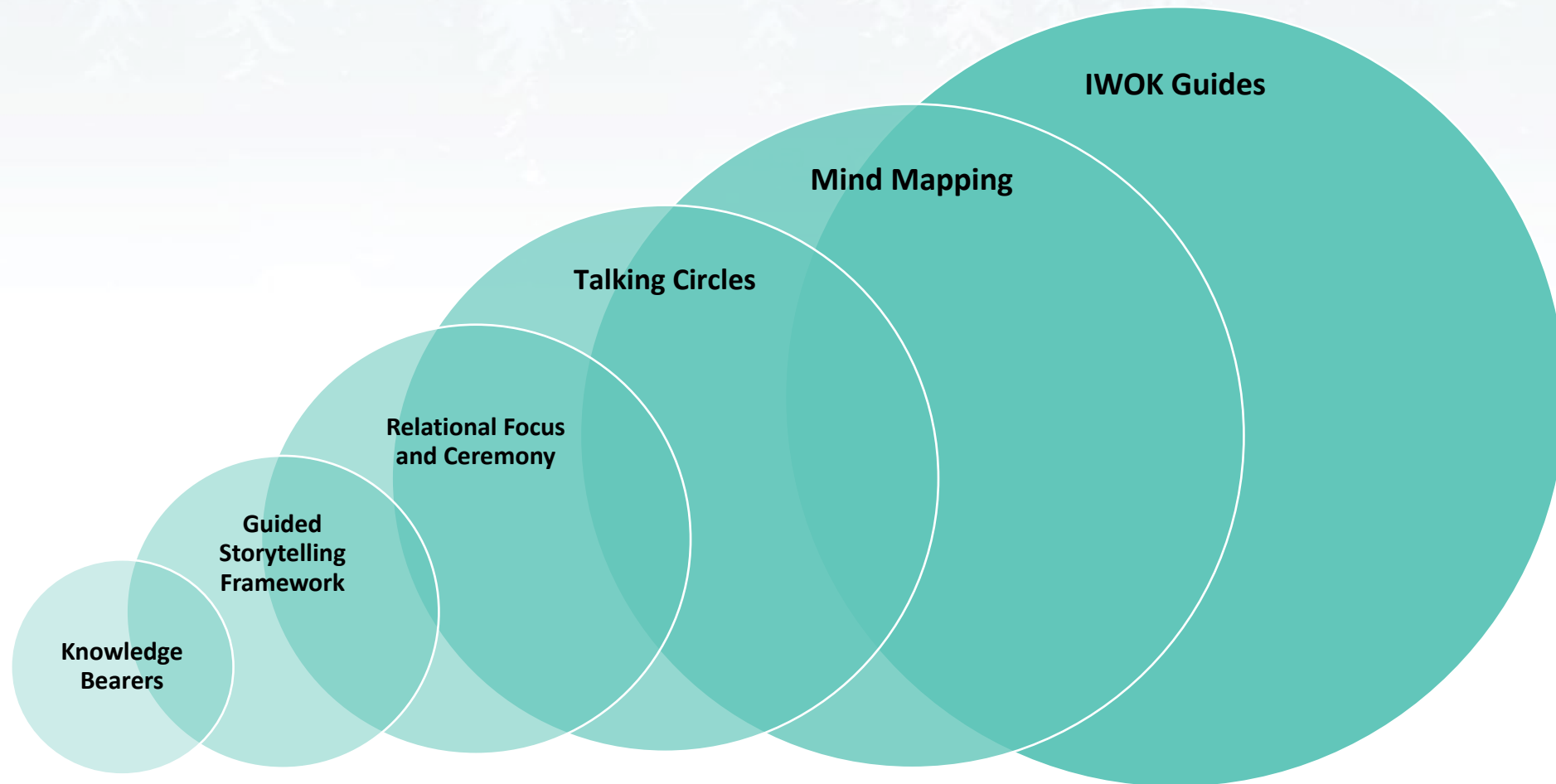




# Indigenous Ways of Knowing (IWOK)

- The concepts of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in the evaluation of Native community implemented programs to reduce risks to children and families
  - Storytelling
  - Cultural Humility
  - Ceremony
  - Values
  - Cultural Congruence

# Building the IWOK Process Model for Evaluation



# Building Relationships and Trust





# Building Relationships and Trust

- **Communication**

- Share your true self with them.
- Develop other ways of communicating with them.
- Get to know more than one person from that Tribe/agency.

- **Authenticity**

- If they invite you, observe/participate in events.
- Respect and honor their ways.
- Listen to them with your heart and spirit.



# Challenge of Trust

What does "evaluation" mean to you right now?



What should evaluation be?



*“Evaluators—and their close relatives, researchers—are not popular in Indian Country. The field of evaluation draws heavily on research methodologies that can be considered invasive when imposed by outside funding agencies. The close connection between research and evaluation is problematic to many American Indian and Alaskan Natives whose tribes and families have suffered from a long history of intrusive studies that, while building the reputations of anthropologists and other researchers, have brought little to Indian communities and have actually resulted many times in cultural exploitation and the loss of intellectual property rights. The unpopularity of research permeates Indigenous communities.”*

*(LaFrance & Nichols (2010), p. 14)*



# Lead With Your Heart

To understand the needs of Indian Country, and get to the root cause...



*“Get out of your head and  
into your heart.”*

*— Priscilla Day, PhD*





# Ceremony





# The Ribbon Ceremony



***“This powerful ceremony helped the project team to visualize these connections to both living and past spirits and solidified bonds between participants and those spirits of loved ones and ancestors. Everyone in the circle demonstrated vulnerability and trust through sharing very personal feelings and stories about the people invited into the circle. Everyone shared tears and laughter together, and we felt, whether a Center team member or women’s group member, Native or non-Native, that we all share a common sense of humanity and can develop trust for each other.”***

**– Yéil Koowú Shaawát Evaluation Report**

# Designing, Planning, and Information Gathering





# Identifying a Cultural Metaphor

Haa Shuká is a complex expression of one's relationship to a clan, relatives in other clans, the spirits of the land and animals, and spirits of ancestors who have walked on to the next world. It is an expression of connection and relationality to Tlingit and Haida ways of being and knowing. The meaning of Haa Shuká in the context of the curriculum extends to healing and living in a good Tlingit way within one's environment.





# Haa Shuká

***“Today, I am a strong, empowered, warrior woman. My choices are different and, as a result, my life is different. Yéil Koowú Shaawát not only impacted me; it also changed lives of my descendants. With generational healing, each generation will grow further and further away from the atrocities that happen to our children. I always say with the Yéil Koowú Shaawát program: “Start local and go global.” My dream is that one day no child will know abuses. Already I am healed more than my mother; my son is more healed than I am; and his children will be parented with more tender loving care—and so on throughout time.”***

***– Patricia Graham***



**Patricia Graham, Yéil Koowú Shaawát**

# Forms of Information Gathering



## Informed Consent

We will start by providing you with a form explaining your rights as a participant in this evaluation. You will also have an opportunity to ask questions.



## Weekly Sticky Note Poll

Each week, we will ask you to describe something you learned, felt, or took away from that week's lesson.



## Virtual Talking Circles

At the end of each phase, we'll talk with you about what you learned and the impact on you and your family.



## Personal Reflection

Through writing, photography, or other forms of art, you'll create a personal remembrance of your healing journey in this program.



## Meaning Making Interview

At the end of each phase, we'll talk with you about all the evaluation activities you participated in.



## Final Report Review

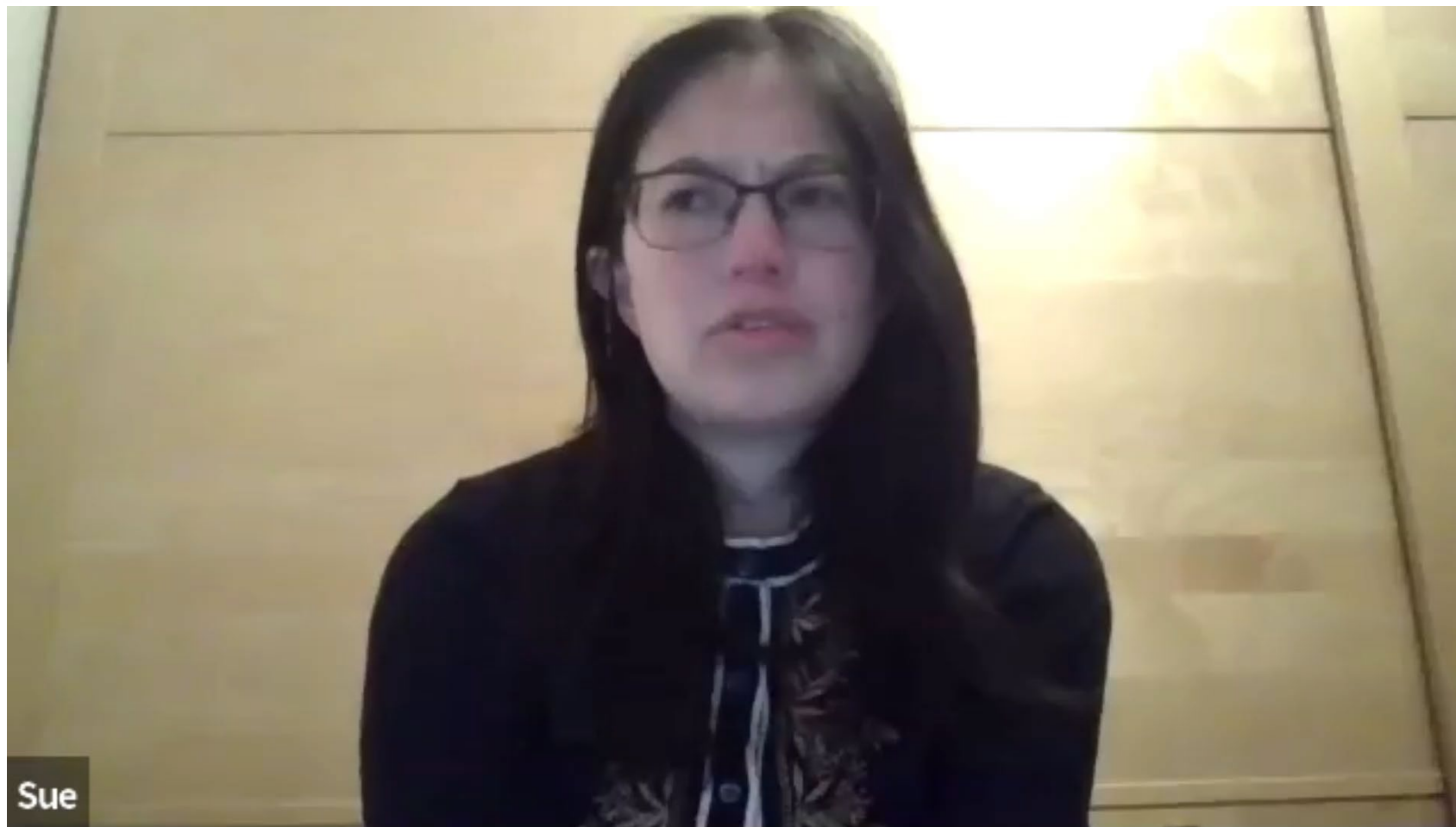
You will have a chance to review the final report that CNCFR writes and provide comments to our team.



[Y]ou [the Center team] really listened. From the very beginning, the very first talking circle...and what came out of that has everything to do with how we proceeded with gathering material and collecting data. For example, I remember a couple of different interviews where they [the women in the group] are specifically telling you, 'yeah, I'd like to do something like write or I'd like maybe to do it in a more creative artistic way, or maybe I would like to take photographs.' ... I think your [team's] willingness to be open and innovative like that led to some pretty spectacular projects that we came up with."  
(Amalia Monreal)



# Talking Circles



*"I think I just kind of appreciate how kind of how holistic this approach has been because it doesn't feel any different than any of the other Talking Circles. It really just kind of like an extension of it." -  
Supanika*



# Yéil Koowú Shaawát Personal Reflection

- In trying to understand how the Yéil Koowú Shaawát curriculum impacted the lives of women and their families the team sought to better understand the healing journey along with hopes, fears, dreams, and intentions of participants - for their children and family.
- Participants were asked to complete personal reflections that describe who they were at the time and who they hoped to be when they graduate or finish the Yéil Koowú Shaawát curriculum.



## Write It

A letter to your future self at the start of the curriculum, followed by a letter to your former self when you finish the curriculum



## Photograph It

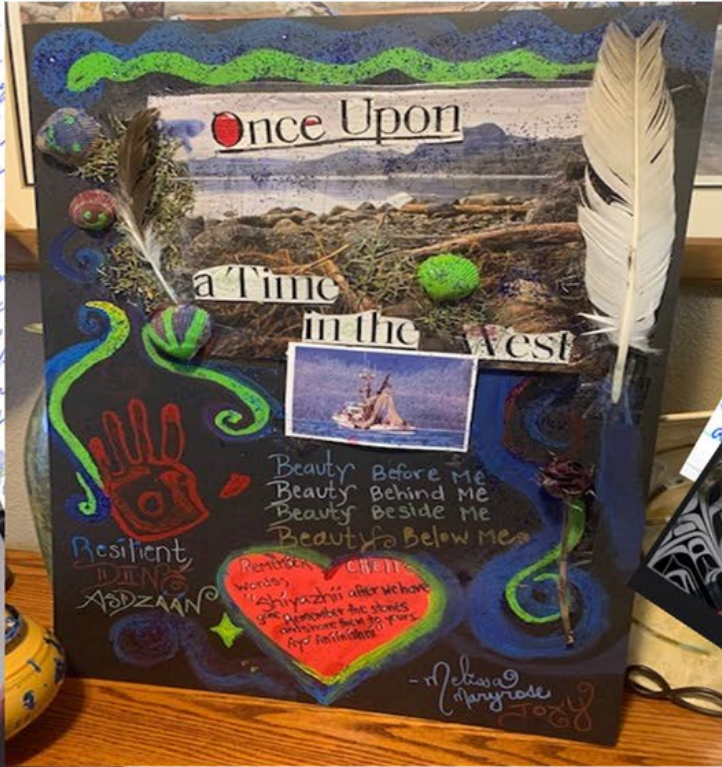
A photograph or collection of photographs taken by you or owned by you



## Create It

An original drawing, painting, collage, or other artistic piece of your own creation

# Personal Reflections - Examples





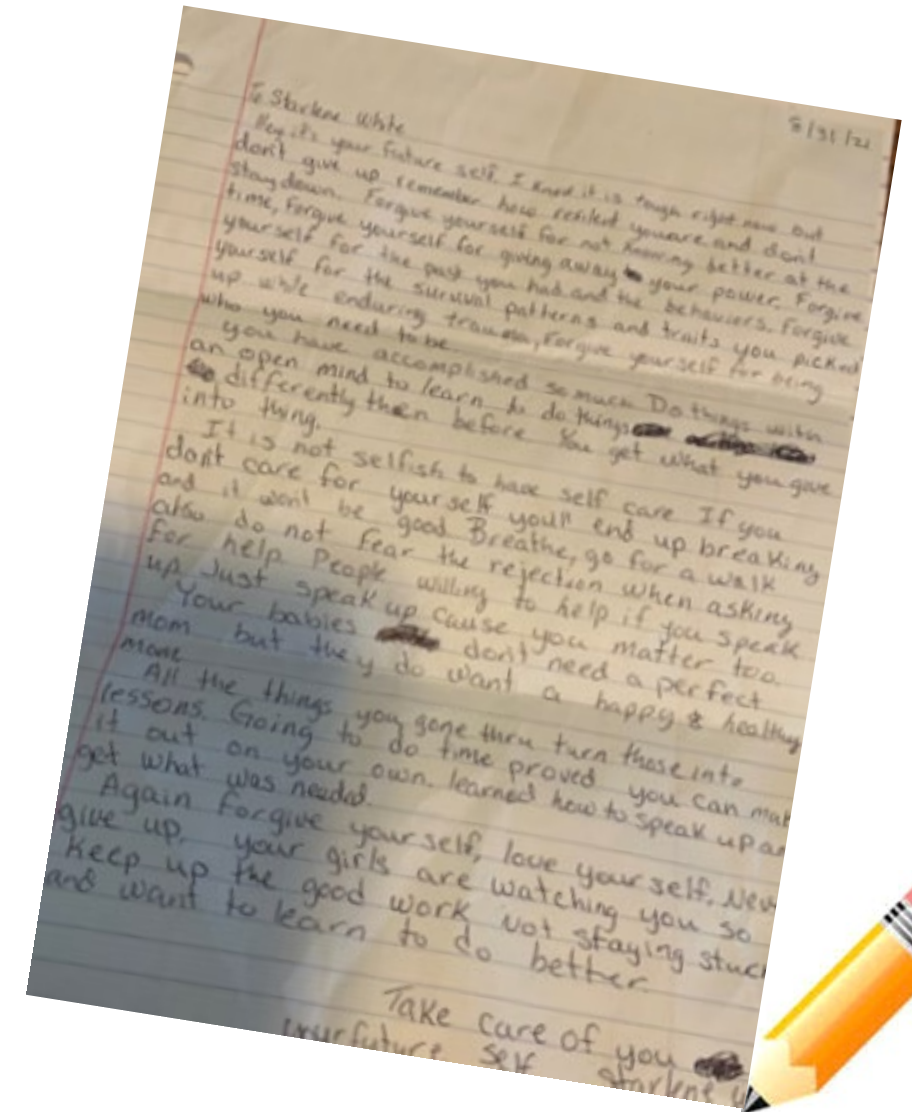
# Personal Reflections – Write it Letter to Future Self

Hey, it's your future self. I know it is tough right now but don't give up. Remember, how resilient you are and don't stay down. Forgive yourself for not knowing better at the time, forgive yourself for giving away your power. Forgive yourself for the past you had and the behaviors. Forgive yourself for the survival patterns and traits you picked up while enduring trauma. Forgive yourself for being who you needed to be. You have accomplished so much. Do things with an open mind, to learn to do things differently than before. You get what you give into things.

It is not selfish to have self-care. If you don't care for yourself, you'll end up breaking and it won't be good. Breathe, go for a walk, also do not fear the rejection when asking for help. People are willing to help if you speak up. Just speak up, because you matter too.

Your babies don't need a perfect mom, but they do want a happy and healthy mom. All the things you've gone through turn those into lessons. Going to do time proved you can make it out on your own. You learned how to speak up and get what was needed. Again, forgive yourself, love yourself, never give up, your girls are watching you so keep up the good work not staying stuck and want to learn to do better.

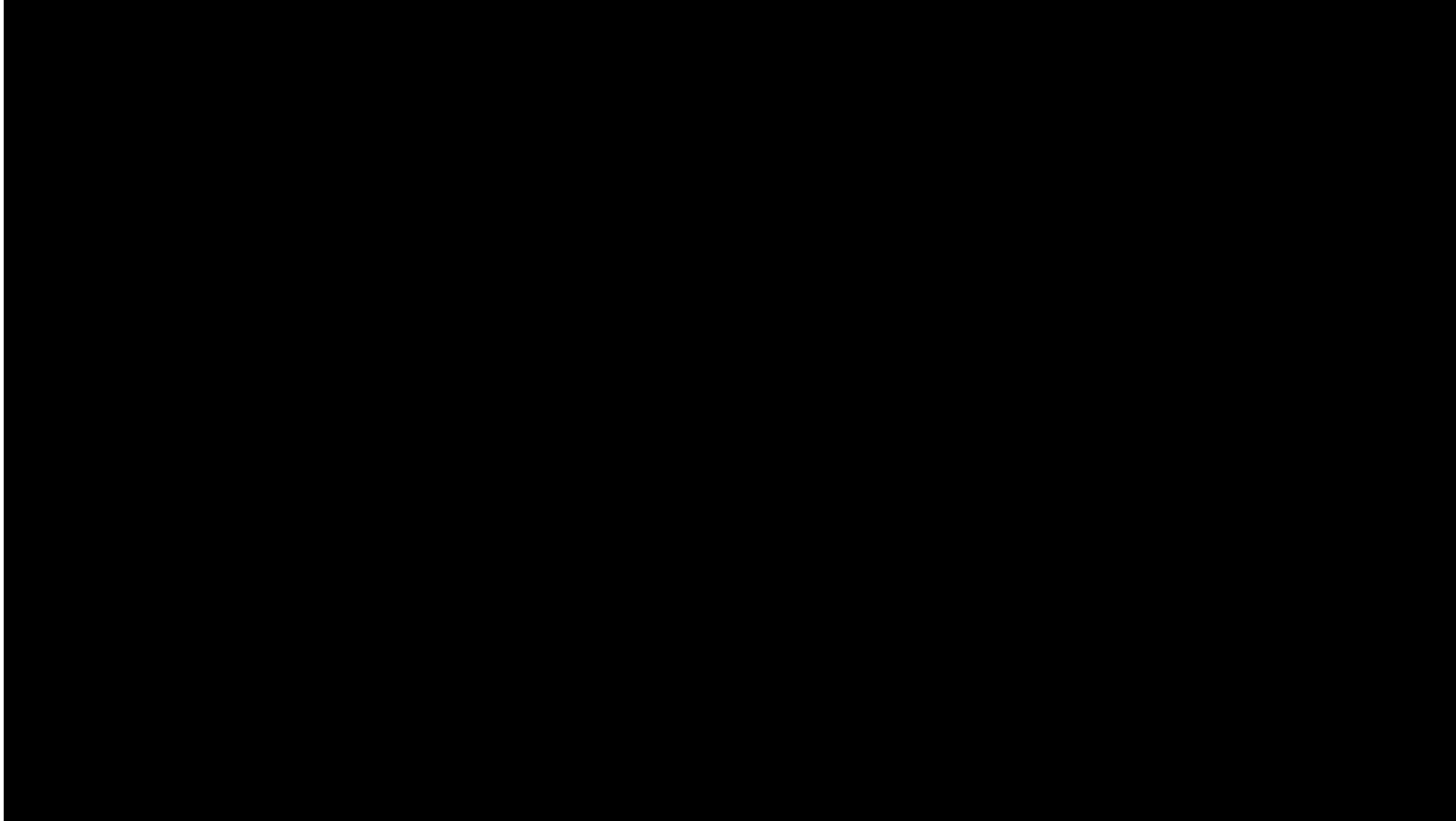
Take care of you, Your future self







# Personal Reflections – Create It



# Personal Reflections – Create It



# Healing Village

An advisory group called the Healing Village collaborated with us during the analysis phase to:

- Ensure accuracy of initial evaluation findings (*Did we get the story right?*)
- Prioritize findings (*What elements of the story should we highlight or emphasize?*)
- Add depth, context, and nuance to findings (*Where should we dig deeper?*)
- Address unanswered questions and clarify interpretation of findings (*Is this cultural concept or experience accurate?*)
- Identify emergent themes or gaps in our analysis (*What do you see and what is missing?*)



# Findings and “Outcomes”



# Story of the Project ... Impact of the Work

Across all sources we found evidence the Yéil Koowú Shaawát curriculum:

- Strengthens cultural identity and restores women's Haa Shuká
- Promotes resilience and healing of intergenerational and historic trauma
- Contributes to the acquisition of healthy parenting skills and behaviors





# Implications of This Work for Future Projects

- Instilling hope and optimism
- Demonstrating an evaluative approach that honors IWOK and reflects the community...not us
- A shift in the perception of evaluation from a required western imposition toward a tribally driven opportunity to tell their program's story (e.g. Families First)







# Story of Healing



My spirit is strong because my ancestors who came before me live within me.



# Lead With Your Heart

“It starts with one woman; it’s one woman, teaching, listening, sharing, pouring, supporting, another woman, who does the same for another and another in a circle; a sacred circle. Women in a courageous journey together. Traveling together on a path of self-exploration, self-examination, introspection.”

- Amalia Monreal



# Closure – Lessons Learned

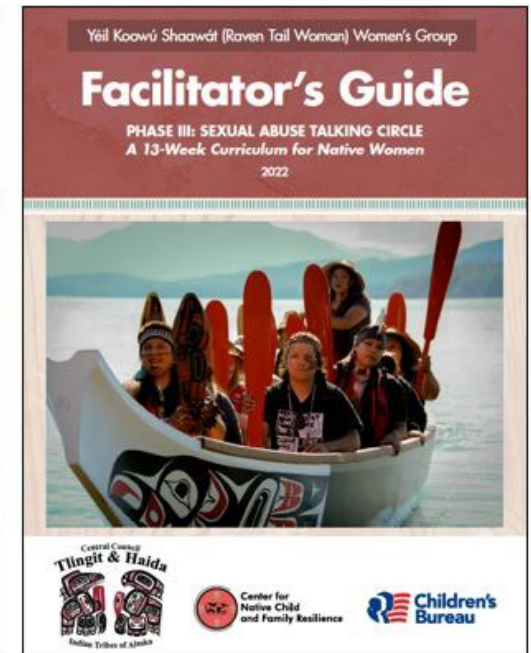
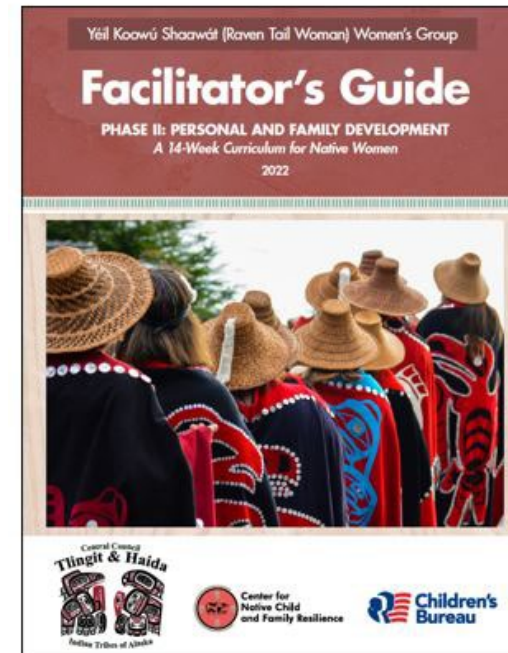
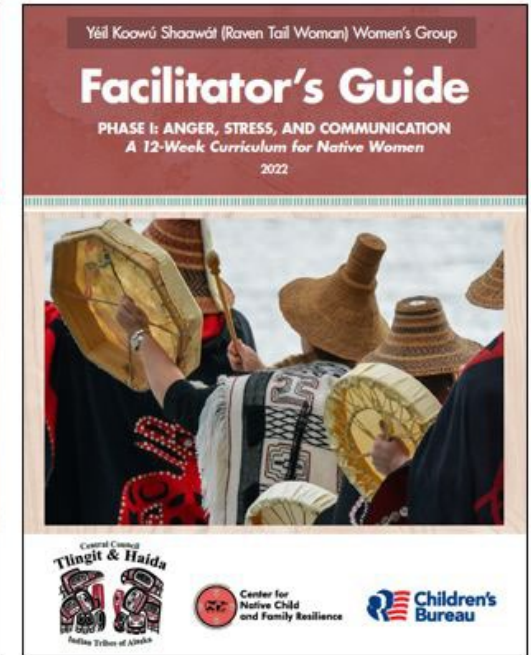
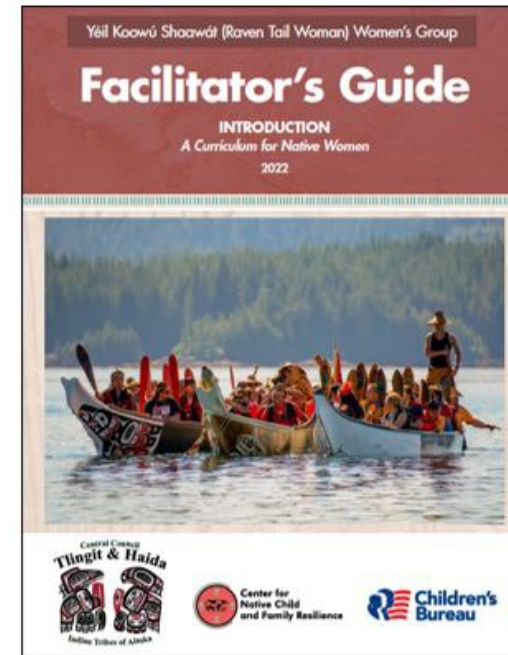
- Promoting IWOK and achieving effective partnership required elevating the cultural values of humility, reciprocity, and understanding and internalizing Tribal sites' history with research abuses and historic and ongoing trauma
- Relationship building must start early, even before the planning phase, and it should be anchored in respect, trust, and openness
- Utilize consultants or staff members who understand IWOK, know how to utilize it in research, and have worked with tribal projects in the past. Be attentive to growing the capabilities of more junior or inexperienced staff
- Readiness assessments need to be able to tell a complete and detailed story about where sites are and what they need to advance





# Resources

- Products developed during the 5-Year period:
  - Program Manuals
  - Implementation Manuals
  - Legacy plans
  - Facilitator Guides
  - Discussion Guides
  - Templates, tools, schedules, and trackers
- For more information:  
<https://cncfr.jbsinternational.com>



# Questions?

- Describe how you evaluate cultural programs in your community?
- How do you see this type of evaluation/story telling working in your community?

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