



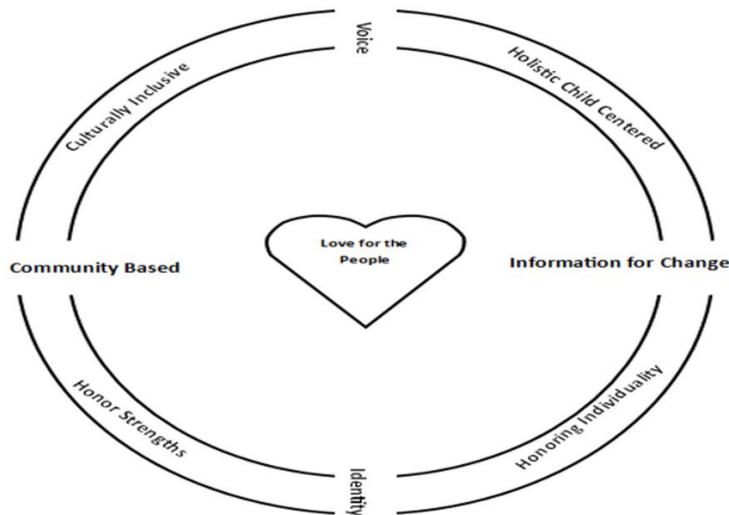
## Native Voices in PBIS FY21 Summary Report

Prepared by: Govinda Budrow, Consultant and Dan Torrez, MDE

### INTRODUCTION:

Native Voices for PBIS is a statewide partnership focused on exploring ways in which Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) may be used as an evidence-based behavioral intervention to better serve all American Indian students in K-12 public educational settings throughout the state of Minnesota. To date, active partners in this initiative include the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College (FDLTCC), and seven district partners throughout the state, who are specifically mentioned later in this report. The inception for this initiative occurred on April 25th, 2019 with a day-long gathering of passionate American Indian educators. This group of “Dreamers” was led through discussion protocols in collaboration with MDE and FDLTCC representatives in order to envision how educational systems could look by the year 2027 if PBIS was implemented with a specific focus on being culturally appropriate for American Indian students.

The results of the Dreamer meeting are documented in previous summary reports of this initiative, but it is important to center all of the work that we do for this initiative on the ideas discussed during that day. Themes from the work done that day all revolved around the central concept of having unconditional love for the people. The group felt as though any educational system and set of practices require having unconditional love for the people receiving the support. It is only by recognizing someone as an individual, and loving them holistically that real impact and educational change can happen. Other themes of the day include: holistic and child centered, honoring individuality, honor strengths, being culturally inclusive, and using data for change. A visual representation of that day’s work is highlighted in the image below.



## **TRIBAL NATIONS EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

A critical component to the success of this project is making sure that Minnesota tribal communities are aware of this work, and have a platform to affect the direction of this initiative. The Tribal Nations Education Committee (TNEC) is a group of tribally appointed representatives which advocate for American Indian students in Minnesota. TNEC advocates for positive change in areas including, but not limited to: curriculum review, student achievement, language revitalization, revision of the American Indian Education Act, and teacher training. Their mission is to strengthen, protect, and advance the overall education experience and opportunities for all tribal (American Indian) students, families, and communities of Minnesota.

On Thursday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 MDE and FDLTCC partners attended the TNEC consultation meetings hosted virtually via Zoom. On that day, initiative partners were able to present updates to the work being completed on the project during FY21. Updates included: Workgroup membership list, Elder names and interview process, local American Indian Parent Advisory Committee meetings, and limited FY20 survey results. In addition, initiative partners requested input from TNEC on three specific questions:

1. What have you seen schools do to create a safe and nurturing environment for Indigenous students?
2. Do you have recommendations for people (or areas of the state) we should add to our workgroup?
3. Do you have recommendations for people we should add to our Elder interviews?

Feedback from TNEC focused primarily on procedural expectations regarding our work and its connection to Indigenous students throughout Minnesota. TNEC expressed two main procedural concerns. One concern was that the Office of Indian Education at the Department of Education was not more explicitly involved and updated on the incremental progress of our work. The other concern TNEC expressed was that our group had not gone through the formal consultative process, and had presented our information in a more informal update format. Moving into the next fiscal year of this work, initiative partners need to engage more directly with the Office of Indian Education at the MN Department of Education, as well as engage within the formal consultative process, as defined by MDE's Office of Indian Education.

## **WORKGROUP RECRUITMENT:**

Another way this project intends to bring in Native Voices is by the assembling of a workgroup of educators that identify as American Indian or work directly with American Indian populations. In addition to finding educators that have intense background knowledge of American Indian communities, we also sought out individuals that have experience with the PBIS framework, or currently work within a school district that actively implements PBIS. This workgroup of educators may overlap but differs from the initial Dreamer group, because the workgroup will be actively and intentionally listening to stakeholder groups to determine what kind of changes can be made in systems to positively impact change.

The vision of the workgroup was to assemble a team large enough to accurately represent American Indian communities throughout the state, but small enough to allow for the agility of its work. Initial outreach in FY20 started with focusing on the top 20 districts serving American Indian students (identified by state enrollment count). Recruitment for the workgroup was initiated by MDE and FDLTCC partners and focused on the top 20 school districts serving American Indian students and identified individual districts that have had schools complete PBIS statewide cohort training. In addition to those two criteria, initiative partners also identified districts that were not overrepresented within special education (overrepresentation defined by expressing a “risk ratio” of 3.0 or higher for any special education category) for American Indian students. Once target districts were identified, email and phone recruitment by initiative partners ensued. Additionally, recruitment in FY20 also included interested partners that had attended presentation sessions at the Dream Catchers Winter Gathering.

These recruitment efforts were successful in bringing together an extremely talented group of partners to serve on a workgroup dedicated to the improvement of PBIS systems that serve American Indian students and families throughout the state of Minnesota. In FY 21, the dynamics in the group have changed a little but the attempt to represent around the state regionally has been sustained. At the end of FY 21, five of the seven FY20 members remained. One member was added. One member replaced a position at the same school and one member stepped back due to school duties during COVID. Individual workgroup members and representation are listed in the table below. All workgroup members participated in this project as an optional activity in addition to their roles within any LEA or other agency within the state. The duties and tasks of these workgroup members for this project were outside the scope of their primary roles within their respective districts.

<b>Name of Participant</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>School or Agency</b>
Dan Torrez	Alternative and Preventative Services Specialist	MDE
Govinda Budrow	Project Consultant	Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College
Delores Gabbard	American Indian Education Liaison	Moorhead Public Schools
Laurie Eide	American Indian Education Liaison	Greenway Public Schools
Lowana Greensky	American Indian Education Director	Greenway Public Schools
Carline Sargent	American Indian Education Director	St. Francis Public Schools
David Helsper	American Indian Education Liaison	RedWood Area Schools
Edye Washington	American Indian Education Director	Duluth Public Schools
Ethan Neerdaels	American Indian Education Director	Osseo Public Schools
Sonia Wadena	American Indian Education Director	Bemidji Public Schools

## **WORKGROUP PLANNING AND WORK DURING FISCAL YEAR 2021.**

Workgroup deliverables for this fiscal year included the following:

1. Attend up to 5 in-person meetings OR up to 40 total hours of virtual meetings.
2. Complete community survey follow-up phone calls
3. Write and submit a final summary report
4. Elder interview and summary report

During this year, the work group met on the following dates:

- October 28th, 2020 from 1pm-4pm (Virtual)
  - Re Engaging and goal setting for FY21
  - Distance Learning impacts on Indigenous students
- November 10th, 2020 from 9am-Noon (Virtual)
  - School Climate Survey preliminary results, discussion, and relaunch
- December 10th, 2020 from 9am-Noon (Virtual)
  - Design of AIPAC discussion questions and feedback form design
- February 2nd, 2021 from 9am-Noon (Virtual)
  - Discussion on how PBIS is used within districts represented by workgroup
  - Data collection methods
  - First draft of list of Elders to interview
  - Design of Elder interview questions
- May 4th, 2021 from 9am-Noon (Virtual)
  - Finalizing Elder interview questions
  - Finalizing list of elders to interview
  - Feedback form design
- June 8th, 2021 from 9am-Noon (Virtual)
  - Discussion, Debrief and Activity to pull out themes of AIPAC and Elder interviews

## **STAKEHOLDERS AND KNOWLEDGE HOLDERS INTERVIEWS**

The FY 20 direct interviews were delayed due to the COVID and a survey replaced that year's connection with community voice. This year, the group was able to complete interviews over zoom, phones or socially distant meetings. At the time of this reporting there were three out five elder interviews reported on, two American Indian Parent Advisory Committees (AIPAC) and one elder group called the Iron Range Council of Native Americans were interviewed over several dates. Many of the interview participants covered both the role of caregiver and elder so we have combined the information from the stakeholders and knowledge holders interviews for

reporting purposes. The number of participants in the interviews was 21 participants that were all Native caregivers or elders. Two out of the three elders are currently the primary caretakers for students enrolled in a K12 school.

The work group developed a series of questions that were intended to begin the conversation and then allowed them to listen to the stories that were brought forth. The work group participants were all individuals that have community ties that allow them to hear within those stories the messages and themes that will drive this work in the future. Each of the work group members following the interviews filled out forms to identify the messages or themes that emerged, stories or quotes that stood out, things that worked and things that did not work.

These are the sample interview guiding documents that were created by the work group and used as a basis of the interviews.

### **Native Voice for PBIS Elder Interviews:**

The goal of this initiative is to positively impact the systemic factors associated with establishing a safe and nurturing school environment for Indigenous students throughout the state of Minnesota. By amplifying the voices and stories of our local tribal communities throughout the state, we hope to improve current educational outcomes by enhancing what is working and reducing what is not working. These voices will be used for change and creating actionable steps that can be taken by schools throughout the state.

### **Notes for questioning:**

Ask questions in neutral ways without prompting or leading any particular response.

Ask questions in your own voice.

The initial question isn't as important as the follow-up questions.

Listen intently and ask questions to uncover underdeveloped portions of responses.

1. What was your experience as a student in the schools? Have you had experiences beyond your days as a student within the school system?
2. What impacted **your experience** in school? Follow-ups: if it were negative, why? If it was positive, what helped?
3. Besides the school, what other factors may impact education? How does the school system support or respond to those factors?

4. What's your perspective of American Indian curriculum within your school? Follow-ups: what more is needed? What is going well?
5. What do you know about special education or other supportive services at your school? Follow-ups: How do you know about these services? Tell me more about...

***For Elders raising kids currently in schools:***

6. How is the school working to support behavior and attendance at your student's school? What may not be working?
7. What are schools doing well to communicate with you? What may not be working?
8. Who do you go to when you have needs for your child? Why do you go to them?

**Native Voice for PBIS for AIPAC or Caregivers:**

The goal of this initiative is to positively impact the systemic factors associated with establishing a safe and nurturing school environment for American Indian students throughout the state of Minnesota. By amplifying the voices and stories of our local American Indian communities throughout the state, we hope to change the narrative by enhancing what is working and reducing what is not working. These voices will be used for change and creating actionable steps to support American Indian Students that can be taken by schools throughout the state. Notes for questioning:

- Ask questions in neutral ways without prompting or leading any particular response.
- The initial question isn't as important as the follow-up questions.
- Listen intently and ask questions to uncover underdeveloped portions of responses.

1. What is your experience in the schools? Follow-ups: experiences with – administrators, teachers, other students, community?
2. What impacted your experience in school? Follow-ups: if it were negative, why? If it was positive, what helped?
3. Were there outside factors that impacted your education? How did the school system support or respond to those factors?
4. What's your perspective of American Indian curriculum within your school? Follow-ups: what more is needed? What is going well?
5. What do you know about behavior support at your school? Follow-ups: Tell me more about that.
6. What do you know about special education support at your school? Follow-ups: Tell me more about that.

**Themes Identified in the Interviews**

The following themes were identified after each interview.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Invisibility</u></b></p>	<p>Hiding Nativeness if you can</p> <p>Teasing and bullying related to being Native or having dark skin</p> <p>Invisible or Harassed, choose from these hard choices</p> <p>Conform to the “white Perspective” things go better</p> <p>Racism</p> <p>Rare to see Native Teachers</p> <p>Tribal reservation schools, residential schools, land grant colleges provided concentrated reflection of students to each other</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Curriculum</u></b></p>	<p>We are not a season, we are year round</p> <p>Curriculum: Nothing about Native History or culture</p> <p>No memories of anything “Indian” ever being taught</p> <p>Schools Curriculum is NOT enough</p> <p>Tribal reservation schools, residential schools, land grant colleges taught standard curriculum not about tribal history and culture</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Responsibility</u></b></p>	<p>There needs to be more done within a district by a district, not just by the Indian Ed Office</p> <p>Why doesn't the school board reach out to us, why do we always have to go to them</p> <p>Culture: Learned only at home</p> <p>Relationship Building</p> <p>Restorative Practices</p> <p>Safe and welcoming</p>

## Overall Feeling of Educational Experiences

Each of the work group members was asked to describe the overall feeling of each of the interviewees experiences with education and in the majority of responses that feeling was satisfied. When asked to describe examples that support that sense, the following was provided.

- Considered satisfied with room to grow
- AIPACs have knowledge of the what is occurring in the schools but think about all the families that do not know
- Increased knowledge of Indigenous students/staff
- Increased knowledge of smudging and asema

The interviewees that had a dissatisfied educational experience provided the following support for that overall sense.

- Schools have not changed much
- Students getting into trouble for correcting teachers on Indigenous history or terms that are used
- Schools still do not teach the historic truth, still only the White perspective
- Natives alive today were mainly raised in the White man's way. Native people who want to learn their culture, language and history need to find resources on their own.

## Significant Quotes from Interviews

The following were quotes that were raised by workgroup members that occurred during the interviews.

*“The way the word Indian was said by White people let me know that it was bad and we were below them.”*

Elder Interview

*“White people have a lot of words to get to understand how they feel. Native people talk and live with what is in their hearts, people of little words.”*

Elder and Caregiver Interview

*“Have Respect for all because they only know what they have been taught.”*

Elder and Caregiver Interview

*“We live it, not talk about it.”*

Elder and Caregiver Interview

*“Non Indian people are really quick to slap labels on kids.”*

Elder and Caregiver Interview

*“The schools do not want to see me or my wife come into the school when there are any concerns with our grandchildren. We have educated ourselves and know our rights, we advocate for our Native children.”*

Elder and Caregiver Interview

Things that are going Well	Things that are Not going Well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Relationships being built with Indigenous staff/students</li><li>● Use of sacred medicines has been supported</li><li>● Curriculum is getting better</li><li>● Increase in Indian Education programs</li><li>● Bringing in Native consultants into school districts</li><li>● Eagle Ceremonies for graduates</li><li>● Indian education planning pow wows</li><li>● Some improvements with Indian Education</li><li>● Having the office of Indian Education so visible and connected with students</li><li>● Having language programs in the schools</li><li>● Some access to Native curriculum</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Curriculum is not where it should be</li><li>● Most Indian education work is done in isolation when the whole system should be involved</li><li>● Sometimes staff/teachers do not know how to reach out families so no contact is being made that is why knowledge of and relationships are so important</li><li>● Schools continue to not teach about: treaties, stolen land, case laws, water rights and most of all accurate history and only teaching the White perspective</li><li>● Children should be introduced to Native languages. Languages that have been spoken for thousands of years should not be allowed to die.</li><li>● Schools need to stop expecting Native kids to be successful in schools that are not meeting their needs.</li><li>● Things need to be done differently because what they have done for years is not working.</li><li>● Many concerns about Native children being labeled as SPED.</li><li>● Still needs to be a lot of work done to improve curriculum and resources to help our children learn spirituality, culture, history, and language.</li><li>● District has done nothing to connect to us</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Indian Ed is always chasing the district to put data and information in classes</li><li>● Schools should come to us for help, parent committee is always open to having anyone come to meetings</li><li>● Invitations to come together to staff and school board and they do not show up</li></ul>
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### **Other Feedback and Blind spots that Emerged**

Stories of being involved with the American Indian Movement (AIM) and being rejected for jobs on the reservation for being seen as a troublemaker.

Positive stories of residential schools. Sports, access to art supplies, stability, other Native students, school related jobs.

Struggles with historical trauma. Feeling that there needs to be more done to help children heal, heal self first/family/community. The belief that you cannot force traditional beliefs on people.

Request to train the superintendents, the principals and the school boards from the top down, they have no clue why we are here.

### **Work Group Team Summary**

During the last meeting, we asked the work group members to consider all the conversations and interviews that they had over the last year as a part of this project. With that consideration they began to identify their own themes and then when all themes were identified the work group members created groups of similar themes and labeled the groups. Below is the result of that work that was done virtually through a Themes and Dreams Jamboard. There were three overall groups of themes named: Relationships, Representation and Systems Change.

Relationships		Representation		Systems Change	
Relationships are important	Hurt Feelings	Advocacy	Communication	Systems Change	Holding districts accountable
Families not being heard or valued	Mistrust from the past and still occurring	Brainstorming and idea sharing	Sharing	Actions speak louder than words	Follow through with what you say you are going to do
Support	Unique	Work for positive change	Like minded efforts	Curriculum	If what you do is not working, be open to try something new
		Voices of Stakeholder	Hear Me/See Me	Hiring staff with knowledge of Native people/culture/language	

Next, the group was asked to dream about some changes that could occur that are related to the themes and what was learned over this last year. The Themes and Dreams Jamboard was used again to capture the thoughts of the group. The results of that are below.

Dreams for our three Themes: Relationships, Representation, Systems Change				
The goal of this initiative is to positively impact the systemic factors associated with establishing a safe and nurturing school environment for Indigenous students throughout the state of Minnesota.			Districts post job openings with tribal colleges	Prioritizing American Indian staff within hiring structures
MDE Office of Indian Education is able to increase staff, 3 sites, North/Central/South	Create a curriculum specialist position that support teachers in implementing American Indian contributions and perspective into daily curriculum	Systems of support that have the ability to last beyond the individuals that currently fill those roles	Leadership in Indian Education	MDE withhold funding or some kind of action from districts who are out of compliance with state statutes.

**NEXT STEPS:**

In planning for the next phase of this initiative, we are anticipating more work dedicated to exploration.

1. Ongoing recruitment of work group members in order to ensure adequate representation from around the state.
2. Further exploration work, collecting the voices and stories of the individuals by expanding to more elders, AIPACs and other community groups.
3. Identify ways in which core features of PBIS align with the themes of our exploratory work to this point of the project.
4. Implement the written process for TNEC consultation, as outlined by Minnesota Department of Education Office of Indian Education.